

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Vol. I No. 1 Nov. 15 = 1917

PRICE 10
Cents



Feature Story

The Eel Man

By

Robert Carlton Brown

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

ISSUED SEMI-MONTHLY

LU. SENARENS, Editor

NOVEMBER 15, 1917

Vol. I.

PRICE 10 CENTS PER COPY

No. 1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Feature Story

- The Eel-Man By Robert Carlton Brown 3
A Story of the Voodoo Worshipers

Serial Story

- The Croymen Case (A Detective Serial) By Police Captain Howard 35

Short Stories

- A Tale of a Private Letter-Box By Cleveland Moffett 29
Ghost of the Cosmopolitan By Wm. H. Sanford 32
The Rajah's Chessmen By Ernest DeLancey Pierson 40
Phantom of the Grove By Professor Sardini 43

Miscellaneous Matter

- An Extraordinary Exchange By Jean La Rue 39
Another Mystery Solved 31

Current News

Electricity Replaces Kerosene in Locomotive Headlights—Australia Imports \$6,000,000 in Autos—Women as Builders of our Aircraft—Convicts May Knit for Soldiers—May Fit Dutch Soldiers with Wooden-soled Shoes—Japs Make Paper Clothes—Ordered for Foreign Service—Artificial Legs for Animals—Women in Men's Places—Utah Sugar Beet Farmers Pledge Help to Refiners—Influenced by Auto Suggestion—Women Refuse to Wear Overalls—40,000 Houses Destroyed—Nine Sons of Cabinet Officers with Army or Navy—Christmas Packages for United States Soldiers in France 45-48

Published by Frank Tousey, Publisher, 168 West 23d street, New York City. N. Hastings Wolf, Pres.; Chas. W. Hastings, Treas.; Chas. E. Nylander, Sec'y. Copyright, 1917, by Frank Tousey, Publisher, New York. All rights reserved. Application made for Second-Class entry at the New York, N. Y. Post-Office.

NOTICE—No letters will be answered or manuscripts returned unless accompanied by sufficient postage. The publishers disclaim responsibility for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts. All remittances should be sent by express money order, P. O. order, check, registered letter, or draft to insure safety. We will not be responsible for money sent otherwise.

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE:

Domestic (Single copy, 10 cents.
Yearly, \$2.50.

Canada\$2.75
Foreign\$3.00

FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 168 WEST 23d ST., NEW YORK CITY, N. Y.

.. Announcement ..



MYSTERY MAGAZINE has been issued to fill a unique niche in the field of literature. Its objects are both to amuse and instruct. A staff of famous authors has been secured to fill its pages with the best material procurable, and a corps of celebrated artists are employed to illustrate the covers and stories. It is printed on the finest quality of paper, in clear, legible type. Stories by the following well-known authors will be published in each successive number:

Cleveland Moffett
Julian Hawthorne
Edgar Fawcett
Albert Bigelow Paine
Ed Mott

Amos J. Cummings
Robert Carlton Brown
Jessie Bartlett Davis
John Habberton
Edward W. Townsend

Harold Steele MacKaye
Laurana W. Sheldon
Mrs. E. Burke Collins
A. Oakey Hall
Helen W. Pierson

The contents will deal exclusively with romance and realism of the most puzzling character, consisting of stories and articles of the most absorbing mysteries, both real and imaginary. Every type of story appealing to human superstition or curiosity will be published. They will contain a deeply fascinating element, absorbing heart-interest, and the most powerful dramatic situations.

Many of the stories are based on such subjects as fortune-telling, astrology, hypnotism, dreams, spiritualism, palmistry, etc., and some will be splendid detective stories. While they are deeply mystifying and puzzling, the solutions will be very simple.

In addition there will be interesting short articles of universal interest, captivating sketches and splendid serial stories, psychological items, and, in fact, every known topic which will be of interest to old and young.

We intend to improve each number as fast as we learn the likes or dislikes of our readers, and will spare no amount of money or energy to make MYSTERY MAGAZINE an unqualified success.

Our next issue will contain a mysterious feature story, a continuation of the serial matter, a number of intensely interesting short stories from the pens of some of the above-mentioned well-known writers, and brilliant special articles of a vital kind. Do not fail to get a copy of the second number, out December 1st.

FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher.

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

The Eel-Man

A Story of the Voodoo Worshipers

By ROBERT CARLTON BROWN

CHAPTER ONE

JARD THE "SEARCHER"

"YOU had better leave that ring in the vault while you're gone on this crazy excursion, Ann," said Mrs. Weyman to her daughter, a small, wiry brunette with the allure of a water-sprite. They were standing on the deck of the *Searcher*, a trim pleasure yacht of gleaming white which Ann's prodigal Uncle Harry had loaned her during his absence in Japan.

"No; I can't leave this at home," exclaimed Ann spiritedly. "It looks so much like an engagement-ring. I think it will have the effect of keeping off some of the romantic young Spanish scions we may meet down in the Caribbean." She turned with a gypsy smile to Stevens, a boyish friend of twenty-five who, having nothing better to do but perfect his knowledge of seamanship, had accepted Ann's invitation to go along as honorary captain and protector of herself, Jean Holland, her girl chum, and Mrs. Huntley, an easy-going, ever-youthful matron of forty, acting as chaperone.

"But, Ann, I thought you were looking for romance," Stevens smiled personally into her large, imaginative, dreamy brown eyes.

"Oh, I am," she exclaimed, flushing delicately. "I want adventure. That's why we chose cruising in the Caribbean, where there are coral reefs, flying-fish, guano caves and mermaids."

"No mermen, though?" asked Stevens.

"I am taking one along with me," Ann laughed into his eyes, and he blushed in turn.

"But the ring," put in Mrs. Weyman insistently. "You know it is worth almost as much as your Uncle Harry's yacht. Please don't take it. How you would feel to lose it!"

"Uncle Harry would buy me another," answered Ann pertly, turning the thousand-faceted canary diamond on her slender, tanned finger.

"He has simply spoiled you!" exclaimed Mrs. Weyman impatiently. "Think of his putting ten thousand into a thing like that which you wear as casually as though it were a gift cigar-band, and he might have sent me to Newport for the season for a fifth of that." She turned to greet a party of gay young people who had come down to see the *Searcher* off, and in the confusion that followed Ann's ring was forgotten.

The graceful launch was dipping into the waves off Sandy Hook, New York far behind, before the ring was mentioned again. It was Stevens who referred to it, standing alone in the stern with Ann, watching the faint lightings of phosphorus riding the waves for flashing seconds in the whirling, effervescent salt foam churned up by the propellers.

"I couldn't offer you a ring like Uncle Harry's," he said, lightly touching the stone, which scintillated even in the gathering dusk; "but some day won't you wear a simple little ring of mine, a ring as humble as my love?"

"Oh, Dick!" cried Ann, turning up her gorgeous, happy face to his and pushing out her lips in a slight pout. "Please don't spoil things right at the start of the voyage. I told you once and for all how tired I was of being made love to.

Let's just be children on this trip. I wouldn't have let you come along if I had thought you'd want to play seriously."

"Oh, I don't, Ann. I don't want to bother you," he laughed into her alluring eyes. "But you did ask me to come along, and that revived the flickering hope you've tried several times to extinguish." He caught her hand boyishly and pressed it to his eager lips. "I'll try to be good, Ann. Just remind me when the romance of the sea wells up in me like a tidal-wave and I break through the dikes."

"Why, you're almost poetic," she exclaimed, allowing her hand to linger in his. For a moment her eyes glowed with a surge of feeling and then she withdrew her hand abruptly and reminded him of their duty to the others, Jean Holland and Mrs. Huntley. They joined them in the golden yellow dining-saloon and spent an hour at bridge before the chef, a fine, big black man Uncle Harry had picked up on one of his Southern cruises, announced dinner.

The salt air had forced an appetite on all of them, and the good-natured chef was kept busy running back and forth between his kitchen and the table replenishing dishes. Not until he had served dessert did he have an idle moment, and then Ann asked interestedly: "Weren't you born down where we are going, Tony?"

"Yes, ma'am," grinned the negro. "Ah was borned an' brought up in Hayti, whar chicken stealin' ain't no crime, an' clothes is only a question of convenience."

"That's the island of voodoo worship?" queried Ann.

"Yes, ma'am," Tony answered seriously. "That's all the religion I had till the cap'n of a tramp schooner picked me up an' began beatin' me. Then I got the religion of the whip."

"You've been in San Juan, Puerto Rico?" asked Stevens.

"Yes, sir. Very fine place, sir; old plaster walls with lizards two feet long scurryin' around under your feet an' runnin' over your bed at nights like rats."

The women screamed and Stevens laughed. "Those lizards can't swim, can they, Tony?"

"Not a stroke."

"Then we'll sleep on board."

"That ain't so certain, either," said Tony, his eyes rolling uneasily. "There's stranger things happen in the water down there than on land. Spirits an' such. Strange animals in the water that comes up an' peeks in the port-holes an' makes you want to drink rum. Sharks, sea-serpents, mermaids that reach in through the port-hole windows while you am sleepin' sound an' tickles youah feet with their cold, wet finghs."

"Wow! I wouldn't mind havin' a mermaid do that to me!" exclaimed Stevens. "It would be something to tell about all my life. Did it ever happen to you, Tony?"

"Well, no. Not exactly. But I seen the Eel-man once." Tony lowered his voice and glanced toward the port-holes, showing like big black buttons in the yellow wall.

"Who is the Eel-man?" asked Jean Holland with a shiver, half-real and half-artificial.

"Well," said Tony with deliberation, "he ain't a man and he ain't a eel. He's got long hair that shines in the moonlight like a bunch of writhin' snakes lit up with lights and his hands are long feelers like an octopus."

"Is there really such a creature in the sea, near San Juan?" asked Ann, impressed by Tony's serious manner.

"There sure is. Ain't I seen him? He come through the water like a flying-fish on fire, half in, half out. It was moonlight an' I was on watch with the captain an' three others sittin' up on the stern playin' Spanish cards for a peso a point. I saw him first an' I was too scared to holler a warnin' as he heve alongside, reached up one of his long feelers, wrapped it around the captain's leg and pulled him overboard."

"Everybody was excited. The others playin' cards saw him, too, an' he must of swum under the ship with the captain. For a long time we didn't see nothin', an' then there was a flash off by the caves—the guano caves between Puerto Rico, San Juan, you know, an' San Domingo, near the city. It was just a sudden streak of bluish light an' we knew it was them snakes on his hair." Tony paused and glanced uneasily toward the port-holes. The little company stirred and followed his gaze, almost expecting to see the Eel-man appear.

"Boosh!" exclaimed Stevens in a slightly nervous tone. "That's only a sea story. What became of your captain?"

"We found him floatin' three days after. The mate, he'd taken charge, seen somethin' ahead he thought was a log. We hauled it in. It was the captain. Drowned. His coat gone and the money belt that would have kept him on the bottom was tore off." Tony shuffled over to the table and removed the dessert plates, looking very glum.

"And other people have seen and heard of this Eel-man?" asked Ann.

"Yas, ma'am. He's notorious. Ships slide through other ways, when they can, to get to San Juan harbor, but sometimes he scuttles 'em in shallow water, an' they say he stole a girl from a launch like this that was down here last winter, an' a fisherman says he's seen that same gal wavin' a signal of distress in one of the guano caves, but he was afraid to go near, an' everybody else is."

"Why?" asked Stevens.

"Because it's haunted." Tony disappeared into the kitchen and the little party sat averted into silence by his story, not knowing whether to laugh or take the Eel-man seriously.

A demi-tasse and a cordial brightened their spirits and cards were resumed, the Eel-man forgotten until bedtime, when Mrs. Huntley asked: "What day are we due to pass the caves between Puerto Rico and San Domingo?"

"Four days from now, according to the real captain," said Stevens.

"Is there no other way to get into the harbor?"

"I guess not."

"Then why don't we go straight to Havana and cut out Puerto Rico?" suggested the chaperone.

"Oh, no, Mrs. Huntley!" cried Ann. "Don't you know? It's Mardi Gras season in San Juan and we planned the trip to reach there just at the gay time and then follow the season through San Domingo and end up in Havana."

"But the Eel-man?" Mrs. Huntley forced a laugh.

"I rather look forward to meeting him," Ann asserted boldly. "I'm sure he'd never call on us in New York, and we came out to meet adventure."

"I didn't," grieved Mrs. Huntley. "I came along to see that none of you reckless children was kidnaped."

"Kidnaped! By the Eel-man! Wouldn't that be delightful," smiled Ann.

"But he'd make such a poor lover. He's always so wet and clammy. You'd never let him win you. He couldn't!" cried Stevens.

"I should think he could hug rather well with those octopus arms, though," put in Jean Holland, and with a laugh the party broke up and went to bed.

CHAPTER TWO.

THE EEL-MAN.

NEXT day Mrs. Huntley timorously approached the subject of the Eel-man with the captain. He laughed away her fears and had almost convinced her that such a bogey did not exist when, by a slip of the tongue, he betrayed his own knowledge of the mysterious old man of the

sea, and Mrs. Huntley continued questioning him hysterically. As a result of the corroboration of Tony's story, into which the captain had betrayed himself, Mrs. Huntley set out to make miserable the life of everybody on board by thrusting her fears upon them.

Ann and Dick, sometimes finding a spot on the yacht where they could be alone and enjoy the smooth gliding sea, with its Portuguese men-o'-war, floating seaweed and shimmering flying-fish, were always having their romantic thoughts interrupted by the chaperone, and from a joke the Eel-man turned into a very real monster to be dreaded.

"I really half wish he would appear," Ann told Dick on the third night out, just after Mrs. Huntley had begged her to go to bed early and be sure to close the port-hole in her cabin. "I'm going to invite him, put a charlotte russe in the window of my cabin and leave it open to tempt him, or something like that."

"You might sing a siren song," suggested Dick Stevens, drawing closer and enviously watching the light sea breeze play with her wavy hair. "You're a sort of mermaid and I'm sure if you sang at sea he would take you for one."

Ann flushed with pleasure. The warm, Gulf stream air seemed freighted with romance. She lay back and inhaled it dreamily, murmuring: "Oh, I hope we pass through that dangerous, rocky channel between the cave island at dead of night. I'll stay awake and watch for the Eel-man. He shan't escape me."

"He'd miss a lot if he did," remarked Dick ardently. "But why do you waste your time on a mythical soul like him? I'm sure he'd disappoint you, and you know, Ann"—he leaned over from his steamer chair and pressed her hand ardently—"you know, Ann, I would never do that. I'd make it my business to please you always."

"Oh, don't bother me." Ann drew away from him; a whimsical smile lifted the corners of her expressive lips. "I feel that I mustn't fall in love with you, Dick, because my Eel-man wouldn't like it. I'm sure he's going to be an exacting lover."

"You remember the other girl he carried away with him waved a signal of distress from the cave where he kept her. He can't be such an ideal lover as I." Dick sought to share her romantic interest in the adventure.

Next day, after lunch, Ann eagerly questioned the captain about the distance of the Puerto Rico channel.

"We'll be there at eight o'clock to-night if this weather keeps up," he said.

"Oh, that's nice," smiled Ann. "Only I wish you could make it a little later. The Eel-man will probably be eating dinner then and we'll miss him altogether."

"I'm sorry, but I'll have to make it earlier if I can. It's a bad little piece of water to get through, rocks jutting up everywhere, and though we don't draw much water and I know the charts, I've never gone through without worrying."

He went to his cabin to work and Ann spent the afternoon reading aloud to Dick, Jean and Mrs. Huntley, sprawled at their ease on steamer rugs beneath a gay awning protecting them from the intense sun and water glare. Time passed so swiftly that no one noticed the hour until Tony appeared to turn on the electric lights and announce that dinner would be ready in half an hour.

"Why, it's seven o'clock already," announced Dick, looking at his watch and rising to stare ahead over the bow. Making out indistinct rocky forms in the distance, he called to the others and dramatically announced: "The kingdom of the Eel-man is in sight. Look alive, mates!"

Darkness came fast and the rocks, honey-combed with caves which had housed tribes of birds for centuries, became formless masses and finally were blotted out. Tony called them from the rail to dinner, and they continued bemoaning the fact that night had blotted out the weird, uninhabited islands.

"Couldn't we get the captain to anchor here just outside the channel till morning, so we could see them?" Ann asked Dick.

"No," he shook his head. "We're in the channel already and lucky enough if we get through without stoving a hole in the—"

A dull booming sound interrupted him, there was a scraping, momentary quiver and Dick sprang to the port-hole to look out and see what had happened.

"What is it?" screamed Mrs. Huntley, her nerves on edge.

Ann ran out on deck and hurried to the captain's quarters. She found him shouting orders through a telephone to the mechanic in charge of the motor.

"Back her off!" he shouted twice, and ran to the stern. Ann followed, stumbling over furniture and bumping against the railing in her excitement. She heard the captain shouting again: "Stop her! Wait! Hold her!"

Dick appeared at her side and she clung to him, asking questions in a panicky voice.

"It's all right," he assured her. "We've only bumped on some rocks." The captain was hurrying back to the bow. "Any damage?" Dick called after him.

"I think we jarred a propeller loose. It's all right. There's no water coming in. Just grazed a rock that never was put down on the chart," answered the captain.

"What are you going to do? Anchor?"

"Yes. For the night. We seem to be clear of everything, and it's shallow here." He went ahead, shouting orders, while Dick took Ann back to the dining-saloon, where they reassured Mrs. Huntley and Jean of their safety.

"Isn't it exciting!" exclaimed Ann, dancing up and down on her toes and clapping her hands like a happy elf. "Almost ship-wrecked, and we'll have a chance to see the guano caves by daylight after all."

All but Mrs. Huntley shared her pleasure, and while Dick was out looking into the details of the trouble, she told the girls they must go to bed early and keep their lights out and their port-holes closed for fear of the Eel-man. They laughed at her advice, but Tony shook his head solemnly and said she was right. When Dick returned with a report that the propeller was all right, but that the captain had lost his bearings and wouldn't venture out before morning, he was apprised of Mrs. Huntley's warnings and offered to sit up on deck all night to guard against evil spirits.

"Don't be foolish, Dick," laughed Ann. "I think now we're safely anchored we'll all go to bed early so we can get up at dawn and make a trip through the caves."

Her suggestion was adopted, and good-nights were exchanged; Mrs. Huntley making a tour of inspection in her dressing-gown to see that the girls had closed the port-holes and put out their lights. Satisfied that everything was all right, she sent Tony to tell the captain to maintain a double watch and finally fell into a troubled sleep.

Ann was wakeful. After falling into a fitful doze she awakened with a heavy feeling of oppression and realized that she had been dreaming of the Eel-man. He had wrapped one of his tentacle-like arms about her and carried her down to the bottom of the sea, where he had searched her for hidden treasure and at last chopped off the finger on which she wore Uncle Harry's ring. The nightmare had left her shivering, and to calm herself she rose, turned on the light, opened the port-hole for fresh air that the remainder of her sleep might be untroubled, and took the ring, which seemed to burn her finger and recall all the hideousness of the dream.

After gazing out into the night through the small, round window, she returned to her bed and fell into restful sleep.

It seemed but a moment later that she was awakened by a slapping sound on the side of the boat. In an instant her muscles were taut and her heart pounded disturbingly.

The slapping sound was repeated and she was conscious of an uncanny sensation, as though some strange, horrible thing was in her room. Her hand shot out and snapped on the electric lights. In the flood of light she saw a long, writhing arm, dripping water, reach through her port-hole and grope about on the dresser.

Stricken with horror, too fascinated to scream, she watched as the writhing tentacle, or claw, hovered for an instant over the ring she had dropped on the dresser. The weird hand, half-monster, half-human, opened and gripped the sparkling diamond ring. It flashed through the window and was gone.

Crying out, Ann leaped to her feet and threw open the door. Mrs. Huntley ran to her and Dick appeared instantly at his

door. Explaining what had happened, Ann pushed them into her room. They crowded about the port-hole, straining their eyes into the darkness.

Suddenly the water was split by a strange, greenish light, a light that seemed to writhe and wriggle like a nest of illuminated snakes. A moment later the light had disappeared.

"The Eel-man!" gasped Mrs. Huntley. "What the devil could a fish like that want with your ring?" Dick Stevens gasped in wonderment.

At that moment the slapping sound was heard again on the side of the boat. With a suddenness that sent Dick dodging back, the same slimy, eerie hand that Ann had seen wriggled through the window, bestowed a sounding blow on Dick's cheek and disappeared.

"Well, what the deuce!" cried Dick, his face white. "I'm going to find out what that is." He ran through the passageway toward the deck.

"Don't, Dick! Please don't!" screamed Ann, running after him. "If you love me, Dick, don't try to find out anything more!"

"But your diamond!" cried Dick. "That doesn't matter! Let it go!"

"I won't, or the mystery, either," Dick shouted back over his shoulder, gaining the deck and poised a minute before diving into the black water in pursuit of the Eel-man.

CHAPTER THREE

IN THE CAVES

ANN caught Dick around the waist and clung to him as he stood poised to dive into the ocean to solve the mystery. He tried to throw off her hampering arms, but she clung tight to him and, for fear of carrying her into the water, too, Dick pushed back from the edge of the boat and turned a curious face up to the panting girl.

"Why did you stop me, Ann?" he asked. "Don't you want your ring back?"

"It isn't that!" Her eyes glowed into his, and now that he was safe, she smiled sweetly upon him. "It is just that I don't want anything to happen to you. I don't care what becomes of the ring."

"But it's worth a fortune. You don't care that much for me, Ann?" his tone became lighter.

Drawn toward him, she caught his cheeks between her warm, electric palms and pressed his face in a lingering caress which might have finished with a kiss if Mrs. Huntley hadn't stumbled upon them in groping through the dark for the captain's stateroom.

"Did you save Dick!" she screamed, recognizing Ann. "Yes. Here I am," Dick's voice reassured the chaperone.

"Everything is all right." "But the Eel-man?" queried Mrs. Huntley, in a chilling voice.

"Probably down at the bottom of the sea showing his new diamond ring to King Neptune by this time," laughed Ann, squeezing Dick's arm in the darkness to reassure herself of his presence.

"Look!" Dick cried at that moment, and the little group stood electrified at the sight of a flash of blue phosphorescent light cutting the water seemingly a mile away.

"Now aren't you glad you didn't jump in and try to catch him?" said Ann. "You would have drowned probably, like Tony's captain."

"Whatever it is, it certainly can swim," admitted Dick, turning as the deck lights came on and finding the captain and Jean Holland approaching.

After the situation had been explained to the captain, Dick suggested that a search of the guano caves be made immediately. The captain looked at the sky, which was becoming gray with a suggestion of dawn, and finally, with a worried shake of his head, gave his sanction to Dick's scheme.

"It can't be a fish," Dick kept asserting as the light life-boat was being made ready for the adventure party.

"And yet it can't be a man," exclaimed Mrs. Huntley, beseeching Dick with round, scared eyes to stay on the launch.

But Dick could not be persuaded. When the boat was ready he swung into it and gave orders to have it lowered from the davits. As he was waving his hand in good-by, Ann leaped into the boat and seated herself demurely at Dick's side. The boat was already being lowered. Mrs. Huntley and Jean screamed, but Ann only waved a gay farewell, and a moment later the skiff was bouncing on the waves while four hearty sailors pulled at the oars, heading for the great caverns where the last flash of the Eel-man's luminous body had been seen.

Ann and Dick sat tense in the stern, sharing a hushed expectancy as they watched the horizon gradually lifting into the light of a rosy, fresh dawn. The boat nosed in among the rocks at last and was tied to a boulder near the entrance to a great, gloomy cave, where it bobbed about as the little adventure party gathered up torches and weapons and followed Dick and Ann, who intrepidly led the way.

For fully half an hour they pushed their way through winding, tortuous passes, following the roaring stream and continually on the alert for a surprise.

Suddenly the sailor in the lead gave a wild yell, the torch flew from his hand and fell into the water with a loud hiss. An instant later a phosphorescent apparition appeared from around a corner of the cave and shot between Ann and Dick, knocking Ann against the rocks and sending Dick headlong into the water.

The three sailors in the rear sprang forward to seize the fantastic, dancing figure of smoking light, but it dove between them into the black waters and disappeared. One of the men shot, and another cried amid the hubbub that Dick Stevens was in the water and would be carried away by the swift current. They ran along the ledge shouting, until Dick, lying limp over a rock where the current had tossed him, found breath to answer.

He was pulled to safety and the stream examined for the hiding-place of the Eel-man, who had effectively disappeared, and then the little party retraced its steps, their nerves tense, their energy spent.

It was with great difficulty that they made the mouth of the cave. A dozen wrong channels led them into blind alleys, and when at last daylight showed in a far-off ball, like light through the end of a wearisome tunnel, they summoned their last strength in a weak shout of joy.

Five minutes later, standing on the slippery rocks beside the ocean, blinking at the sun, they looked about for their boat. It was gone.

Making sure they had come out by the same opening, they looked about for the launch and, not finding it, began hallooing, in the hope that they might be heard on board. But no answer came.

The disappearance of the skiff in which they had come was a perplexing question. Dick suggested that it might have drifted from its moorings with the rising tide, but the sailor who had made it fast said this theory was impossible and suggested that the Eel-



It dove into the black waters and disappeared.

In the center of the cavern a subterranean spring found its outlet to the ocean in a rushing stream. The explorers walked gingerly on the ledge running at the edge of the water. Above them the black, cavernous space resounded with the flapping of giant sea bird's wings as they flew from their high, safe nests, startled by the lights.

"Isn't it like Robinson Crusoe," Ann gasped to Dick, holding tight to his arm for fear he would stumble off the ledge into the roaring, spitting stream. Her voice echoed and reached through the rocky passes, startling her into silence.

They continued slowly, one of the sailors taking the lead, when they came to a branching-off of passages. Wherever they looked there were no signs of human habitation, only the birds, and probably blind fish in the deep water grottos.

man had swum the length of the stream to the mouth of the cave and loosened the painter.

After shouting for an hour without results, Ann and Dick left the sailors on watch and repaired for rest to a shallow, sunny scooping-out of rock, high above the sea, where they sat and waited to be rescued, missing none of the excitement of their situation and gnawing hunger.

"If worse comes to worst," said Dick, leaning back and looking up at the matted birds' nests clinging to the crags, "I can turn Chinaman and cook you a nice bird's nest pudding for supper."

"Oh, that would be splendid," enthused Ann, "and we could break off a few stalactites and use them for forks."

"But think what Mrs. Huntley would say of our manners."

"In case of emergency, she always says, 'do as your good taste dictates,'" smiled Ann.

Dick caught her hand gaily, pressing it in comradeship. "You're a care-free little girl to be marooned with on a deserted cave island. I rather hope rescue will never come."

"I wouldn't care to be rescued at all if we could catch a few flying-fish and train them to carry little baskets of lunch from Tony to us," answered Ann, withdrawing her hand sharply as one of the sailors peeped over the edge of their romantic little rock shelter and announced: "The *Searcher* is ridin' in. They heard our shots and came to the rescue."

"Oh, dear," sighed Ann, as the sailor withdrew. "I knew they would come, and here if they hadn't I might have found out how resourceful you are."

Dick caught her hand as she rose and straightened her clothes. "Listen, Ann; won't you stay a little minute. I wanted to tell you the kind of poetry you make me feel, sitting alone up here, with nothing but the sky, a patch of water, the free, soaring birds—and you."

"No," she said reluctantly, allowing her hand to linger. "It would spoil our party if you made love to me. Remember, you promised you wouldn't."

"But I haven't, Ann. I was just saying——"

The sailor appeared again over the edge of their snug bowl. "Please, ma'am, Mrs. Huntley has come ashore and she believes you've been kidnapped. Won't you come down and calm her?"

"Oh, Mrs. Huntley!" Ann laughed to Dick, helping him to rise. "She'll never let me out of her sight again after she hears what happened in the cave this morning."

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MISSING BOAT.

THEY clambered down the rocks and found Mrs. Huntley, Jean Holland and the captain, all anxious to hear more news than the laconic sailors had reported and glad to welcome back the truant pair.

"Oh, you've torn your dress, Ann!" exclaimed Mrs. Huntley with motherly solicitude. "And your clothes are all wrinkled and out of shape, Dick. What a sight you are!"

"He fell into the water," smiled Ann, "and we were lying up on a nice rock drying him off in the sun when you came."

"You'll catch your death of cold," cried Mrs. Huntley.

"I'm more likely to catch my death of hunger," answered Dick. "Where's good old Tony?"

"He's on board."

"You haven't got a sandwich in your pocket, have you, Jean?" asked Dick.

"No. If you and Ann are going crazy you can go alone. I'll stay on board and read. I'm not going to think of sandwiches and things for you people. You're able to take care of yourselves," answered Ann's chum, putting further questions to them with languid interest, which showed she wasn't likely to share in any of their adventures.

They rowed out to the launch in the second life-boat of the *Searcher*, and, over a lunch Tony had prepared for them, continued the absorbing question of the Eel-man and the diamond.

"You should cable your uncle that you've lost the stone," said Mrs. Huntley.

"What good would that do?" asked Ann. "Mother might be startled and wire for me to come home. Besides, Uncle isn't back from Japan yet."

"I don't like to leave this place until we get the diamond back," said Dick thoughtfully. "It seems as though somebody ought to run down the thief. I think the Eel-man is a fake."

"But he gave you a tangible slap on the face to remember him by," put in Mrs. Huntley with a shiver.

"I vote we stay around here and explore the cave again. It's certain that we struck the hiding-place of the Eel-man."

"But he slipped past you and got away," said Mrs. Huntley. "My nerves are on edge. I've just spoken to the captain. He says we're not far from San Juan and we're going to put in there right away."

"Well, I'm going to sit up in the bow and keep a look-out

for the Eel-man," said Dick, "or that boat of ours he must have set adrift."

"He only shows up at night," put in Ann, turning to Tony for corroboration.

"Yas, ma'am," said Tony, "an' I'm afeerd he's cast a spell on this voyage. I don't like the looks of all of this."

As they were talking the boat began to move and Dick went forward to sit where he could watch the gleaming, emerald water and ponder over the mysterious disappearance of the diamond.

Ann joined him a little later and together they watched as the romantic little tropical city of San Juan appeared ahead, its white-washed walls gleaming in the intense sunlight.

"It looks just like a cannibal island, doesn't it?" mused Ann, as a long, white beach edged with cocoanut palms came into view.

"I guess you won't find many man-eaters there. It's quite a modern city," said Dick. "Probably you'll run across some lady-killers, though. They say these Spaniards are very gallant and charming."

"Sounds exciting," breathed Ann. She pointed to the red-tiled roofs of several large houses concealed by the palm-trees. "I wonder if those are the American colony cottages?"

"Yes. That's where they ought to be. Right by the bathing beach. Doesn't it look fine? I think we're going to have a great time here."

"It can't be too good a time for me," answered Ann, her eyes dancing. "But I do wish I hadn't lost that ring Uncle gave me."

"Never mind. I'm not through with that Eel-man yet," said Dick, with some assurance. He leaned suddenly over the bow and pointed to a little skiff hobbling on the waves near the harbor. "What's that?" he cried.

Ann looked. "Just a man rowing a boat," she said.

"But that skiff!" Dick was straining his eyes to read the white letters painted on the bow of the small rowboat. "Look, Ann!" he shouted an instant later. "It says the '*Searcher*.'"

"Why, it does!" cried Ann excitedly, making out the letters.

"That's our boat. The one the Eel-man set adrift this morning."

"And I suppose you'll say that's the Eel-man in it."

"I'll bet it is. Look at the length of his arms as he sweeps the oars." Dick ran for the captain's cabin, shouting as he went that the lifeboat was in sight.

The *Searcher* put on full speed and made for the lone oarsman, who seemed to sense that he was being pursued and was making rapidly for a long, low wharf, where a great liner was docked.

"We can't make it!" cried Dick, returning to Ann's side. "But maybe I can jump to the wharf and catch him on land. Look at him row!"

A minute later his boat bumped against the dock and the rower, hastily grabbing up a bundle from the bottom of the boat, leaped to the planking, turned a corner around a fruit shed and disappeared.

"Make it!" cried Dick, beside himself with excitement, standing on the short storm-deck covering the bow. A moment later he had leaped ashore and dashed around the corner of the fruit shed. Two blocks ahead, at the foot of a short hill, he made out the feeble form of the boatman. The man turned and looked back. His long hair was flying behind him. "It's the Eel-man, all right!" cried Dick, sprinting after the fleet, flying figure.

CHAPTER FIVE

A MYSTERIOUS MASQUERADER

WHEN Dick reached the bottom of the hill he stopped a moment to take his bearings. The man he had been pursuing was already out of sight and he had no idea what he would find at the end of the short, steep street. A dozen boys were following him, and he noticed a score of curious natives popping out their brown faces from stone doorways to look at him.

The chase seemed futile, and he feared that by continuing it

he would only make himself conspicuous and spoil his chances of ultimate success. So he turned back reluctantly, coming upon Ann at the end of the wharf, looking for him.

"Any luck?" she asked.

He shook his head in reply.

"We found only a bottle of fire-files in the boat," she said. "The man must have been a native."

"Why?"

"Haven't you heard that in some of these cave islands the natives catch fire-files, bottle them up and carry them around for lanterns?"

"No. That sounds like a fairy story," replied Dick.

"I've read it in two books now. This fellow's lantern is back there for proof."

"There was nothing else?"

"Not a thing. Except that the painter wasn't cut. It must have been untied by some one."

"Couldn't have been anybody else than the Eel-man," decided Dick.

"But the fellow you chased didn't resemble the apparition we saw in the cave, and his arms weren't anything like the one that came through my port-hole," remarked Ann.

"They were pretty long."

"I think you're barking up the wrong tree. I think the Eel-man really lives in the water and couldn't row a boat to save his life. The boat must have been set adrift by him and one of the natives in a near-by cave must have found it and rowed in here to San Juan." Ann paused and waved her hand toward a long street stretching out along the waterfront. It was festooned with colored tissue-paper and gay ribbons. "Look!" she exclaimed. "It's carnival time. The Mardi Gras. One of the men on the dock told the captain that the big ball of the Caliph secret society is on to-night. A costume party. They dance the real Argentine tango and everything here. Won't it be fun?"

"It would be more fun for me to spend the night gum-shoeing for that Eel-man. I've got a good picture of him in mind now. The two is pretty small. I'm going to stick around until I find him."

"Then who will I go to the ball with?" pouted Ann.

"Maybe we can't get in," suggested Dick hopefully, anxious to get out of the party so he could follow the lanky boatman.

"Yes. Anybody can go. It's only a question of price. All the people from the American colony will be there. It is the one gay season here, between rains and scorplings."

"What'll you wear?" asked Dick.

"I've got a Spanish *senorita* costume I brought along because I knew I'd need something like that."

"And you'll do up your hair and blacken your eyebrows and carry a dagger, like Carmen," enthused Dick, taking her arm as they returned to the boat, bothered by the stares of curious native children in rags. "I couldn't resist that. I'll forget the ring for to-night and go."

A little later the whole party of the *Searcher* made its way through the rocky, narrow streets of San Juan and turned in at the best hotel for dinner. Everywhere the gaiety of the *festa* was in the air. People passed in all manner of masquerade costumes and every one greeted every one else informally in Spanish.

"I wish I knew some of the lingo," said Dick. "I think we'd get more fun out of it."

"I'll bet you'd get into trouble if you did," Ann smiled. "Let well enough alone."

After dinner they strolled along the *paseo*, enjoying the general gaiety, dodging confetti and sampling every kind of tropical fruit offered by the persistent vendors.

"The ball doesn't begin until ten o'clock," announced Dick, having looked up the information and secured tickets. "We'll have plenty of time to dress."

They returned to the boat and an hour later sallied forth in two rattling cabs. The largest theater in town had been transformed into a ballroom, a floor being laid over the orchestra chairs. As they entered a riot of color struck their eyes and held them fascinated.

"Why, it's just like a futurist painting!" exclaimed Ann breathlessly, pulling tight the gay mantilla she wore and opening her fan to play her part.

The grand march was over and the first dance was on. The

dancers moved in a hundred different costumes of fantasy. All seemed electrified by the season. There were hilarious laughter and mad gambling. Every celebrator, child-like, had provided himself with some novel plaything. A clown stopped before Dick and soberly offered him a light from a sardine-can made into a cigar-lighter. A group of youngsters in limp costumes paraded before Ann and admired her through flimsy, red celluloid opera-glasses. A man in peasant garb stepped beside her and squirted perfume down her neck.

As the cold liquid struck her skin she recoiled and screamed. Dick's laugh brought her to the realization that it was only a prank, and she smiled to the man, who forthwith claimed a dance in broken English. In spite of Mrs. Huntley's objection, Ann waited off with him amid the red-cloaked devils who left her to chase a crowd of girls appearing as angels, with mosquito-netting wings.

As the dance wore on everybody indulged in wine and by midnight the hall was filled with boisterous revelers, forming great rings, holding hands and circling about like happy children. Crowds played "crack the whip" and chased each other with perfume squirters until Mrs. Huntley began to fear for the safety of her charges. She called Ann aside and said they had better be going.

"But it's such fun," protested Ann. "I'll be very careful. All the people here are nice. I've met so many Americans and I'm really having such a good time."

"But stay with Dick. Please be careful. Don't leave him. You can't tell when the wine will get the best of one of these mad Spaniards." Mrs. Huntley sighed her dread and called to Dick, who came and promised to keep Ann in sight.

They plunged again into the riotous dance and struggled with the others for sweets which dropped from a big tissue-paper ball in the center of the room and lured the dancers to ambitious antics.

As they dropped down wearily in a corner Dick suddenly leaned forward and stared at one of the dancers singled out for a second from the mad melange of people.

"The Eel-man!" he exclaimed.

"Where?" cried Ann, instantly excited.

"I saw him just a second ago. Now he's gone." Dick stood up to survey the dancing crowd.

A man beside him laughed. "You've heard of the Eel-man then?"

"Yes," answered Dick, turning to him.

"I thought the story was entirely local," continued the other, an American living in Puerto Rico, who had been introduced to them earlier in the evening.

"Our cook told us, and then we saw him," said Ann.

"That's a rare privilege," was the response.

"Isn't he seen often?"

"I should say not. You really did see him in the flesh?"

"I don't know that he's flesh and blood," said Ann, "but we certainly saw the phantom that's behind all the tales one hears of mysterious happenings of the caves."

She continued, describing the Eel-man and the missing diamond ring, until Dick, who had been searching the crowd since the first sight of the Eel-man, interrupted with "There he is again!"

Ann and the American followed his gaze. A tall man in a flapping, greenish suit that glowed with phosphorus was walking straight toward them. His hair seemed on fire and as he came he wriggled his arms like feelers and moved his legs so gracefully that he seemed almost to be swimming.

"Well, this beats me," exclaimed Dick.

"Oh," laughed the American, "his costume is common enough. The story is well known and some young fellow has adopted the make-up to have a good time. That's all. Don't be frightened. The real Eel-man is seven thousand fathoms down in the sea at this moment and I hope he'll stay there."

Ann moved uneasily as she saw that the masquerader had singled her out and was coming to ask for a dance. Dick looked at her anxiously and shook his head, fearing that in a moment's bravado she would dance with the man. He didn't know what he dreaded, but the experience of the night before and the morning in the caves made him nervous.

"*Senorita*," greeted the fantastically costumed fellow, bowing before Ann so deeply that his long, smoking hair swept the ground, "*haga mi favor de un tango con*—"

"What is he saying?" cried Ann, turning to the American. "Oh, he's just asking for a dance. Go ahead, why don't you dance with him? He should be very graceful, with such serpentine limbs."

"All right, Mr. Eel-man!" cried Ann, glancing spiritedly at Dick and jumping up before he could restrain her to throw herself into the outstretched arms of the masquerader.

They glided off together, leaving Dick standing beside the American, his jaw set, eyes glowing and face dead white. He wanted to follow them and not let Ann out of his sight for an instant. But the crowd of dancers was too thick, and the American was reassuring him about the man.

"It's all a joke, you know," he was saying. "The real Eel-man may be little more than a superstition of the sea. Some folks say he's a real man and that he has a cable stretched across the rocky passage, which he pulls taut when he wants to stop a ship and make a little trouble. But I doubt it."

"A cable!" exclaimed Dick. "Why, that explains about a rock we hit. The captain said there was no such rock on the charts, and now I believe it was a cable. Wait till I hunt him up and tell him."

In the excitement of the moment, having already lost sight of Ann and her partner, he hurried off to a box where the captain sat with Mrs. Huntley and Jean Holland, who didn't care to dance.

"Who is that awful creature Ann is dancing with?" demanded Mrs. Huntley, meeting Dick at the door of the box. "The Eel-man," said Dick, forcing a smile.

"Great heavens! It looks like him. Do stop her."

"All right. I think it would be better myself. Where are they?"

"I just saw them a second ago, over there," Mrs. Huntley indicated a corner with her fan, but though both looked, Ann was not in sight.

"If he's dancing we ought to be able to make him out, he's head and shoulders above the rest," said Dick, continuing to search the hall with his eyes.

"Perhaps they're sitting down."

"I shouldn't have let her get out of my sight!" With a sudden feeling of nervousness Dick dashed through the crowd, pushing them aside and making for the end of the hall where dancers sometimes promenaded beneath the balcony. The short walking space was jammed. Harlequins were thumping people with great bladders of air, everybody was throwing confetti or shooting perfume. It was difficult for Dick to distinguish anything in the medley.

Coming upon an American he had spoken to at dinner, he grasped the man's arm and asked, "Have you seen the lady who was with me?"

"The black-haired one? She came here as Carmen?" asked the other.

"Yes."

"She was here a moment ago. I tried to help, but they pushed me back. She fainted."

"Ann fainted!" cried Dick.

"Yes. The man in the grotesque Eel-man costume carried her out to get the air. Some one said the Eel-man sprayed her with ether from one of those perfume atomizers."

"Ether!" exclaimed Dick.

"Yes. It's used commonly enough at dances here in the tropics. It evaporates so fast and gives a chilling feeling to the skin that's rather excitingly pleasant," explained the other.

"God, man! Why didn't you do something? It's clear he's chloroformed her to get her out," gasped Dick, grabbing the American's arms with crushing strength to hold himself steady.

"Why, I thought this Eel-man fellow must be in your party."

"He wasn't!" cried Dick, knowing it was futile to talk, but being at a loss how to act.

"You mean you let her dance with a stranger at this ball?" The other was agast.

"Yes. I meant to watch her. Which door did he carry her through?"

"I'll show you," offered the American, pushing his way into the mob of mad revelers and making for a street door.

"Hurry!" cried Dick, pressing through the crowd. "We may be too late."

"Here we are!" exclaimed his companion, bursting into a cleared space about the door and asking an attendant to open it.

"No, señor," the attendant shook his head smilingly. "No es posible. No pue de pasar!"

"What does he say?" demanded Dick.

"He says he can't let us out."

"Well, we'll see!" Dick hurled himself against the flimsy panel, which gave beneath his weight.

CHAPTER SIX

A GLIMPSE OF THE RING

AS the door of the dance-hall gave way Dick found himself in a narrow, deserted street. He heard the clatter of a cab around the corner and, not waiting for the young American who followed, dashed off in the direction of the sound.

Coming out on a lighted street, he saw a rickety cab a block ahead, drawn by two horses, galloping beneath the driver's lash. Dick sprinted, feeling sure that Ann was being carried off by the Eel-man in this ramshackle conveyance.

The cab bounced around the corners and Dick found it difficult to lessen the lead the driver had. Suddenly one of the horses slipped and fell, and while the infuriated driver was lashing the animal to its feet, Dick overtook the cab and wrenched open the door.

It was empty.

Disappointed, he turned to question the driver, who could talk only Spanish. A moment later he was joined by the American, who managed to get some information from the cabman.

"He says he saw your friend lifted into another cab by the man in the Eel disguise, but he doesn't know where they went. He was hurrying to pick up a fare who had telephoned him," the American translated for Dick. "It's certain he had nothing to do with this business."

"What shall we do now?" queried Dick helplessly.

"I've a police friend here. The island is policed by Americans, you know, and if a native has caused any trouble he'll pay for it. It's too small a town for him to get away," Dick's companion suggested, leading the way back to the dance-hall, where they picked up the police officer and the captain of the *Searcher*, and sent Mrs. Huntley and Jean Holland back to the launch.

As they started out a low-browed native skulked up to the police officer and grunted a few words in guttural Spanish.

"What did he say?" queried Dick anxiously, thinking the fellow came with some news of Ann.

"He's a stool-pigeon," answered the officer. "He was hanging about the door and followed the man who kidnaped Miss Weyman."

"Then he knows where she is?" cried Dick.

"Yes," answered the police officer. "It is just a question of surrounding the place and making sure of getting the fellow disguised as the Eel-man. The stool-pigeon knows his record and is sure he intended holding Miss Weyman for ransom. It's a common enough custom down in the West Indies here."

"But how would he know Miss Weyman had money?" asked Dick.

"Oh," the officer smiled, "all Americans are supposed to have loads of it and, besides, you people came in a private launch." He turned into a side street and the little party was suddenly joined by two police the stool-pigeon had brought.

"It's this place right over here," whispered the commanding officer. "You two cover the rear," he spoke to his men, "and these gentlemen will enter by the front door with me." He turned to Dick and the captain, saying in a hushed tone, "Watch yourselves once we are inside. These places are like rat-holes and you're apt to fall into a trap. Are either of you armed?"

The captain said he was and Dick preferred trusting to his fists.

As they came up to a dark door the police officer knocked

four times and, revolver in hand, stood ready as a small, sliding peep-hole in the middle of the door was opened. The panel had not slid an inch before the officer had thrust his revolver through the opening with a sharp order in Spanish.

Inside there was a cry of alarm, but the door did not move. The policeman repeated his order sharply, waited an instant and then fired through the small hole, aiming high.

The door shook and suddenly opened inward, Dick and the captain bursting through into a dark passageway, the police officer stopping to handcuff the frightened door-tender.

An unexpected stairway tripped Dick and he tumbled head over heels to the bottom, crashing through a pane of glass and landing in the center of the dimly lighted room. A thin, wiry form lunged through the air at him. Dick grappled with the man, who scratched and bit like a wild animal. In the struggle the lamp was kicked over and they rolled about in darkness, fighting for life.

A sudden report and a flash of light brought a feminine scream in answer. The man fighting with Dick wormed himself loose and disappeared, while Dick, having recognized the cry as Ann's, groped his way toward her, calling her name.

Before he had found her the police officer appeared through the broken window with a light, followed by the captain, who had shot in the air and frightened off Dick's opponent.

The light revealed Ann, crouched in a corner, her face white with fear. Dick rushed to her and lifted her to her feet. She was too weak to stand.

"The man who brought her here?" cried the officer. "Where did he go?"

"When the captain fired he broke away from me and disappeared," answered Dick, supporting Ann until the captain came to his assistance and helped carry her up the stairway and out into the street, where a cab took them to the launch.

They arrived just behind Mrs. Huntley and Jean Holland, who threw themselves upon Ann and asked a hundred questions, until Dick interfered and carried Ann to her state-room. She clung to him confidently and smiled up into his eyes as he laid her tenderly on her berth.

"Keep Mrs. Huntley out, dear," she murmured, as he bent to catch her faint voice. "I want to rest a few minutes, and you are so quiet and considerate. Please stay here."

Dick slipped to the door and locked it against Mrs. Huntley, returning to sit on the edge of Ann's berth and soothe her throbbing temples with his cool hand.

"Ann, dear," he whispered, "I was so frightened. I shouldn't have let you dance with that monster. But I thought you wouldn't like me to interfere."

"Oh, it was all right," said Ann, recovering a little in his restful presence. "It was the most exciting adventure of my life, and as soon as I get my breath I shall enjoy it."

"But what if I hadn't found you? The devil didn't hurt you—"

"He didn't touch you—Ann?" demanded Dick, fiercely.

"No. I don't remember anything for a minute after we stopped dancing and he led me through the crowd for an ice. I think he shot some ether or chloroform into my face. I can remember spluttering and everything growing dark, but it couldn't have lasted long, because I became conscious as I was rattling over stones in a cab, at his side. His arm was around me—"

"The beast!" growled Dick, his fists clenched.

"But in a most fatherly manner, Dick!" exclaimed Ann, brightening and sitting up in her eagerness to tell the story. "Then it wasn't a minute until he helped me out, pushed me gently but firmly through a street door and conducted me down that long flight of stairs you tripped on into that room where you found me."

"What then?" breathed Dick tensely.

"Oh," laughed Ann, quite herself again. "Then he asked me if I wanted some coffee?"

"He asked in English?" queried Dick, surprised.

"No, you goose. He said something that sounded like 'Quere cafe,' and as my nerves were all on edge and calling for coffee, I seemed to know what he meant." She took Dick's hand and pressed it firmly, her face glowing as she continued with a thrill in her voice: "Then, while he was getting the coffee and I was waiting for some hero to come to my rescue I heard that awful clatter you made falling down

the stairs. I'd heard a shot only a minute before and I was ready for anything. But when you crashed through the window instead of coming in the door like a respectable person I was startled to death."

"You knew it was me?" asked Dick.

"Why, no. I thought it was Humpty Dumpty," laughed Ann. "You hadn't pulled yourself together into the semblance of a human being before the Eel-man whizzed past me, spilling coffee on my skirt as he dropped the pot. Look here!" she showed him a stain on her costume. "And then he fell upon you and you were so mixed up I couldn't tell you apart, and then the light went out and I crawled into a corner, and then the captain shot and—oh, wasn't it exciting! I never—"

A knock at the door interrupted and Mrs. Huntley anxiously demanded entrance. Ann looked questioningly to Dick.

"Don't let her in yet?" he whispered, pressing her flushed cheeks between his palms and drawing toward her irresistibly, as though he must kiss her. "I have so much to say, now that you are safe. I don't want to risk you again."

"What do you want to say?" asked Ann, her eyes luminous for a moment and then provokingly teasing as Dick continued passionately?

"Oh, I want to tell you how much I love you. How I want to look after you all your life. How—"

Mrs. Huntley's knocking became insistent.

"But, Dickie, I don't want to be looked after," Ann pouted prettily.

"Please," he caught her in his arms and kissed her flaming cheek. "Please! Say you'll let me look after you always, and keep you safe."

"Oh, Dickie," she breathed languorously, "I'm so tired. Not now. Please, Dickie. I don't want to promise anything. I want to be free as the wind; and, besides, after we catch the Eel-man and get back uncle's ring we'll have plenty of unadventurous times, and then it will be exciting just to have you make love to me."

"Don't talk that way, Ann," he pressed toward her for another kiss, but she twisted out of his arms, sprang lightly to the floor and stood facing him, a bewitching little Carmen, her hair in alluring disarray, her little body bowed back in a fascinating self-reliant pose. She glanced toward the door as the knocking was resumed and then looked back to Dick.

He understood the meaning of her glance and, stepping close, urged:

"We've only a minute alone. Tell me you love me. I would do anything for you."

"I like you," she said, drawing toward the door. "But we're having such a good time now. Please don't spoil it."

"Don't put me off any longer. I can't stand it!" Dick's voice throbbed with emotion. "Tell me when you'll say you love me. You must admit it. You must love me. Tell me when."

"When you get back my ring," she answered gaily, unlocking the door and giving him a very warm, personal look. "If you can get it back you can put it on my finger as an engagement-ring."

"Oh, Ann," he cried, groping toward her with outstretched arms, "I knew you loved me. I knew—"

He stopped as the door flew open and the formidable figure of Mrs. Huntley nearly fell into his eager arms.

Without sensing the tense situation she had ruined, Mrs. Huntley began chattering about the risk Ann had run, what her mother would say and a thousand details that bored the young people.

Before long Ann said she must sleep and Mrs. Huntley reluctantly withdrew, taking Jean Holland with her, that she might be certain of at least one of her charges. Dick lingered to say good-night last and, tingling with emotion, pressed a kiss on Ann's yielding lips.

"You do love me, then?" he urged. "You will marry me?"

With an effort she forced him away, pushed him into the passage and, through the half-closed door, whispered tauntingly, "When you bring me that engagement-ring."

Dick went out on deck and sat half through the silent, warm night, thinking as pessimistically as Kipling about women one minute and singing his understanding of them

as passionately as Bliss Carman the next minutes. Love stirred him deeply; he knew Ann must love him, but her caprice, her impossible demand that he bring her the ring the Eel-man had taken irritated him. He could not understand; and, after trying to solve her real feeling for him he gave it all up and crept silently to bed, determined to do the best he could to win her on her own terms.

In the morning she found Ann finishing a late breakfast alone as he entered the dining-saloon. He pressed her hand warmly in good-morning and asked where the others were.

"They've gone for a walk on shore to see the lizards Tony tells about," answered Ann.

"Why didn't you go with them?" asked Dick, hopefully, thinking she might have been waiting for him.

"I was so sleepy after last night," she answered prosaically, dashing his hopes.

He could not regain the intimate footing of the night before, though he tried by every subtle masculine wile at his command. She held him off as though she had forgotten everything, until he reminded her of her promise about the ring, and then she nodded her head with a smile, assuring him that the bargain still held.

A little later they strolled along the dock to find Mrs. Huntley and Jean.

An attractive ocean liner drew their attention. The gang-plank was being drawn up and they waited to watch the boat pull out.

"Where is she going?" Dick asked a longshoreman.

"Bound for Havana. She's the best boat that calls here. Twenty-five knots an hour. You wouldn't think it, but she can make it."

"Havana," mused Ann. "There's so much romance in the name. I wonder how long it will be before we get there?"

"I don't know; but I'm going to lay in a stock of good cigars when we do land," answered Dick.

"Oh, how unromantic! That's all you think of, cigars and new drinks. It's disgusting," pouted Ann.

"You drive me to it," smiled Dick. "I'd so much rather think of you."

Ann glowed. "That's what I wanted you to say," she admitted, in a caressing tone. "I really didn't mean what I said at all."

Like two romantic children they hung over a pile of bales on the dock and watched the ship pull out. As the liner wheeled gracefully, her propellers churning up foam that welled up almost to the flooring of the pier, a tall, fantastic figure in a wide sombrero appeared at the railing on the stern.

He waved long, tentacle-like arms to Ann and Dick.

"The Eel-man!" cried Ann.

"The Eel-man!" repeated Dick.

As they watched, fascinated by the devil-may-care figure, one of the long arms reached into a flapping coat pocket and drew out a gleaming object. The Eel-man held out his hand toward them, a taunting look on his face as the diamond ring he held in his fingers caught the sun's rays and scintillated like a leaping flame.

"My ring!" cried Ann.

"Good God! How will I ever get it now," groaned Dick, staring at the impossible distance between the ship and himself.

The Eel-man shouted something in Spanish, gave a final twirl to the sparkling jewel and returned it to his pocket, patting the outside of the pocket affectionately and laughing at Dick, who stood on the dock, glaring at him, futilely shaking his fist at the insolent thief.

CHAPTER SEVEN

AT SEA

"CAN'T you do something?" Ann demanded of Dick as he stood stupidly on the pier, shaking his fist after the Eel-man, headed for Havana with Ann's stolen jewel.

"Why, yes. Only it's so exasperating to see that fellow so near," turning excitedly to Ann.

"So near and yet so far," she added.

"Look!" he exclaimed. "Maybe we could overtake the boat with the launch."

"Let's try!" agreed Ann, an adventurous light leaping in her eyes.

They ran along the pier to the gang-plank of the *Searcher* and hurried aboard. The captain was gone, but the mate stood ready to serve them.

"Can you overtake that ship?" asked Dick breathlessly, pointing to the departing Havana boat, which seemed deceptively near.

"I guess so. It would be nip and tuck. We can get away quicker than she can. But a fellow was telling me she makes twenty-five knots when she gets to going."

"Can't we do that at a pinch?" queried Dick.

"I can make an attempt."

"Try it!" ordered Ann.

"But the captain?" the mate hesitated.

"I'm the owner," answered Ann. "We can't wait for his orders."

The mate called the engineer and repeated Ann's order to overtake the departing liner.

"But we're out of gasoline," replied the mechanic.

"Can't you get some, in a hurry?" asked Dick.

"I'll try." The man was gone in a moment.

Before he returned the captain came back with Mrs. Huntley and Jean, who listened to Ann's story as though she had just invented it for their entertainment.

"No more adventures for me," said Mrs. Huntley positively. "Let's stay right here in San Juan. Can't you send a wireless to the boat to arrest the man?"

"I hadn't thought of that," answered Dick, leaping to the pier and running to town, where he hunted out the wireless station and sent a frantic message to the captain of the Havana boat, asking him to arrest the man he described and search him for the diamond he had flaunted in the face of the girl he had stolen it from.

Without waiting for an answer, which the operator assured him could not be expected within two hours, Dick dashed back to the boat and found that a small quantity of gasoline had been obtained.

"Shall we try to overtake her? The wireless is uncertain," Dick spoke to Ann.

"Yes. Let's take a chance," she said.

Within five minutes the high-powered launch was cutting through the harbor, the Havana boat well in the lead.

Dick sat in the bow with Ann, both excited over the race, both trying to reassure themselves and each other that they were gaining on the liner.

The captain came to them with the information that they were making twenty-two knots, the best they could do without wasting the small and precious supply of gasoline.

"Can we overtake her at that speed?" asked Ann.

"It's doubtful," he said. "She may not be making over twenty now, but she can let herself out, and if she does we may be left adrift off the coast of San Domingo, without power to get to port. I think it's best to play safe."

"But she doesn't seem far away," said Dick.

"You know how deceptive the water is when it comes to judging distances," the captain reminded him. "She's a good ten miles ahead."

"Oh, let's keep up the race till the gas gives out," urged Ann excitedly.

"All right. But it's risky. Without power we might be blown against a coral reef and have something more than the paint knocked off our bottom," the captain replied.

"I wish I had thought to offer a reward for the ring the minute we struck San Juan," said Dick dismally. "If I had thought of it then somebody might have brought in the Eel-man, or at least the diamond."

"But you weren't so interested in getting it then," Ann looked up at him archly and he dropped his gaze with a blush, fearing that the captain understood her meaning.

"How far are we from San Domingo City?" Dick asked the captain in a matter-of-fact tone.

"About eighteen miles. Sea miles, you understand. They're shorter than land ones."

"We've got enough gasoline to make that?"

"Plenty."

"What do you think, Ann? Shall we put in there and try the wireless?" asked Dick.

"Perhaps it would be better. But I hate to give up the chase. Can't we burn up a little more gasoline and make it faster?"

"Just as you say." The captain bowed and withdrew.

Half an hour later Ann exclaimed to Dick, "I think we're gaining a little now." She passed her sea glasses to him and he looked at the liner, remarking, "It looks that way." His mouth twisted suddenly and he stared intently through the lenses, changing the focus slightly and exclaiming to Ann, "Where are your other glasses? Take a look. Something's happened!"

Ann groped on the floor for a second pair of sea glasses and they sat in silence for a minute, watching the Havana boat, which showed signs of surprising activity.

"What do you make out of it?" asked Ann presently. "There's no water breaking over the bow. She's stopped," said Dick.

"And look! They're lowering a boat!"

A life-boat had swung out on the davits at that moment and was being lowered into the choppy sea.

"It's well-manned. I can count eight," said Dick.

"So can I."

"There goes another!" Dick cried a moment later, as a second life-boat dropped into the water.

The little skiffs bobbed about near the big boat for some time and then set off in opposite directions, heading into the sea, the men resting on their oars at intervals.

"They're searching for something," decided Ann.

"It couldn't be much else, unless the boat is on fire or they're putting in to San Domingo City for some kind of help."

"Oh, maybe they're taking the Eel-man ashore. Maybe your wireless has reached them and they've caught him already."

"But they wouldn't send him ashore in two-boats going in opposite directions," said Dick, "and I doubt if they'd trouble to drop him. This delay will put them off their schedule, you know."

The captain returned, waving his glasses excitedly toward the boat and explaining to Ann and Dick, "We'll overtake them now. There's a man overboard and before the life-boats give up looking for the body we'll be there."

"Fine!" cried Ann, without lowering her binoculars.

The situation did not change much during the tense half hour that followed. The *Searcher* continued drawing nearer the great liner until those on board could distinguish the faces of passengers and crew on the Havana boat.

When they were within hailing distance Dick shouted through a megaphone to an officer on the bridge, "Did you get the wireless about the stolen diamond?"

"Yes," came the answer.

"Did you get the man?"

"No. He jumped overboard."

By this time they were alongside and Dick clambered up the rope ladder thrown over the liner's side. The captain of the *Searcher* followed and together they entered the pilot-house, where the captain explained what had happened after the receipt of Dick's wireless.

"I had noticed the man among the passengers we took on at San Juan," he said. "Nobody could have missed him. He looked so eccentric in his wide-brimmed, flapping hat. The moment your description came I went through the ship personally, finding him on the weather side leaning against the rail. My first intention was to call a couple of sailors and have him searched and then locked up and carried to Havana, where I would have turned him over to the police. But he seemed such a whimsical sort of chap I thought I might be mistaken. So I stood beside him at the rail and talked to him in Spanish."

"I questioned him about himself and his answers were very vague. I saw that he felt I suspected him of something, and I noticed, too, that his eyes drifted continually toward the San Domingo shore line there"—the captain indicated the land through a window. "He seemed to be calculating the distance and watching me closely for any unexpected move."

"Feeling quite certain that I had picked the right man, and having well in mind the fact that in your wireless message you connected him with the superstition about the Eel-man,

I brought up the subject of this terror of the Puerto Rico pass and he began to get very nervous. I suddenly realized that it was very possible that a fellow of his strange build and manner might impersonate a sea monster of some kind. He gave me a kind of creepy feeling, so I passed on with the intention of sending back three or more sailors to make sure of capturing him."

"Well," the captain threw out the palms of his hands in a hopeless gesture, "when they went to get him he was nowhere to be found. Some one said there had been a splash in the water below where he had been standing and I came to the conclusion instantly that he had jumped in, in the hope of swimming to land."

"How far is it to shore?" asked Dick.

"A good six miles."

"That would be difficult through this choppy sea."

"For anybody else but that fellow," said the captain. "One of the sailors said he saw a human head bob up for a moment near the boat and disappear, and I would swear the black speck I saw a mile off soon after we missed him was the head of the Eel-man."

"It didn't glow with phosphorus, did it?" asked Dick, smilingly.

"No. He slipped into the water to make his getaway before he had time to put on his make-up," replied the captain.

"That's an idea. I've thought it myself. The Eel-man probably has been this fellow right along. With the aid of a smearing of phosphorus and some more stage properties, the kind he had on at the Mardi Gras ball, he certainly would pass for a healthy phantom that would scare any sailor," said Dick. "So you think he's headed for San Domingo now?"

"Yes, if he hasn't reached it. He must be a human fish. We sent out two life-boats and they haven't had a trace of him. I've just recalled them, and we're going on in about five minutes. We've lost an hour on this elusive Eel-man already, and we've got to burn a lot of coal to make up the schedule."

"Well, we won't keep you waiting longer, captain," said Dick, rising.

"What are you going to do?"

"Put in for San Domingo City and wait for him. He won't be expecting us," was Dick's reply.

"That's a pretty good idea. If he wants to get rid of the diamond, and probably that is why he was going to Havana, he'll head straight for the city the moment he reaches land." The captain extended his hand in parting and wished the captain of the *Searcher* and Dick good luck.

They clambered down the rope ladder and joined Ann, telling her what had happened and giving orders at once to put in to San Domingo City.

The gasoline just held out and as they drew up to a pier at the end of the little river harbor the engine gave its last gasp and died.

"In spite of the Eel-man, we've had pretty good luck," exclaimed Dick, extending his hand and helping Ann to the pier.

"What are you going to do now?" asked Ann, looking up into the faces of a score of grinning natives collected on the dock in the hope of making a stray penny.

"There's nothing left to do but look for Mr. Eel-man."

"Can I come?"

"I don't know why not. I'm pretty sure if we do come across him he won't try again to kidnap you."

Ahead they saw an imposing building and read the sign upon it: "Hotel Elegante."

"Let's go in and look at the register," suggested Dick. "The Eel-man has had time to make the city, the way he swims. And he'd have to go to a hotel of some sort to get into dry clothes. He'd excite too much suspicion walking around, dripping quarts of sea water."

They turned in and asked the proprietor, who spoke English, if he had had any arrivals during the past two hours.

"No," answered the man in elaborate English. "Nobody comes here, except a few people on the trains, and every day or two there is a boat."

"Are there any other hotels?"

"Oh, yes. Five or six."

Armed with a list of them, Ann and Dick started out.

There were no new arrivals at the more important places where they stopped, but on asking the interpreter at a small *fonda* on the edge of the town, he looked at them suspiciously and queried, "Why you ask?"

The man's guarded manner made Dick hopeful. "We expected to meet a friend here," he said. "He was in the boat with us and fell into the water while trying to jump ashore. He is a tall man with long arms and legs. His clothing was wet. Has such a man been here during the last hour?"

The interpreter shifted his eyes shrewdly and Dick slipped a five-peso note into his willing palm.

"He is upstairs, in room *numero catorce*"—the wily servant jerked his thumb toward the stairway. "I have bought him new clothes within the *media hora*."

"Come on, Ann!" cried Dick, leading the way up the stairs.

"But wait, Dick." Ann caught his arms and whispered in his ear. "You can't manage him alone. Wait and get the police. Besides, you don't know the room number."

"Sure I do. *Catorce* is fourteen. I learned that in Mexico, in a town named after fourteen bandits."

"But, Dick—" Ann trembled. "If it really is the Eel-man—"

"Listen, dear," Dick whispered firmly. "There's no time to lose. He might slip out a window. I'll take a chance with him alone. If you hear a scuffle and think I'm getting the worst of it—well, you'll know I'm doing it for you, and when I get the ring back you'll keep your promise?" He looked ardently into her glowing eyes.

"Yes, Dick, but I—oh, please don't go," Ann cried as he bounded up the stairs to encounter the slippery Eel-man.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A STRUGGLE.

ON reaching the second floor, Dick scanned the numbers on the door until he came to "14." Pausing for a moment, he listened. There was some one inside moving cautiously about. He did not know just what to do, but instinctively his hand went out and cautiously turned the door-knob.

The door was locked. He could not have expected better luck.

Hearing a sudden noise within and fearing that his turning of the handle had betrayed his presence, Dick knocked boldly upon the panel.

A growl in Spanish answered him. "Amigo!" whispered Dick, recalling the word for "friend" and hoping his accent would pass.

In answer to a string of Spanish Dick repeated "Amigo," and every muscle in his body was taut as he heard the key turn in the lock and saw the door move.

The instant it was open a crack he thrust his foot in to prevent it being closed, and as the grinning, devilish face of the Eel-man peered out and recognized his "Amigo," Dick shoved his shoulder through the door and pried it open, despite the Eel-man's frantic effort to keep it closed.

Before the Eel-man knew what had happened Dick had a strangle hold upon his neck and had backed him into a corner, pressing tight upon his wind-pipe until the yellow eyes of the half-breed Spaniard popped out and his tongue hung out, his nostrils dilating and chest heaving convulsively.

Knowing that once he relaxed his hold the agile Spaniard might knife him, Dick held hard, tightening his grip until the Eel-man's eyes closed and his body slumped as he lost consciousness.

Startled by a noise behind him, Dick removed his gripping fingers from the Eel-man's throat and turned to see Ann, her mouth open in astonishment, rushing through the doorway. "Quick, Ann!" cried Dick. "Go through his pockets. See if you can find the ring."

Dick pulled off his own belt and effectively tied up the long, slim wrists of the unconscious man with it. Then he snatched up a sheet, ripped it and rolled it into a rope and tied the man's legs.

Meantime Ann had been going through the fellow's pockets gingerly.

"Did you get it?" asked Dick as he finished.

"No," Ann shook her head and rose, while Dick stooped and loosened the shirt at the Eel-man's throat. His fingers struck a chamolito bag suspended on a wet string about the man's neck. He tore it off and thrust it into his pocket just as the interpreter and the proprietor of the hotel appeared in the doorway, horrified.

"What you make?" demanded the interpreter.

"It's all right," Dick breathed heavily. "This man is a thief. He stole a ring from this lady. Call the police."

"I will call the police for you!" cried the interpreter, evidently cowed by his employer's fury. "This man is a friend of the proprietor's. How did you get to his room anyway?"

"Why, you told me the number yourself!" cried Dick.

"I did not!" the scared interpreter flung back as the enraged proprietor struck him and cursed him in Spanish for loitering when he should be calling the police.

The proprietor blocked the doorway as Dick took Ann's arm and started to pass out. It was useless to talk to him in English and they could not understand the furious Spanish he flung at them.

Dick clenched his fist and shook it in the fellow's face, trying to push past him at the same moment, but the proprietor dodged back, slammed the door and locked it before Dick recovered from his surprise.

A movement in the corner proved that the Eel-man was becoming conscious. Dick threw up the small window at the end of the room and gave Ann a quick signal.

As she came to his side he whispered, "I'll hang from the sill. It isn't far to the ground; you climb down, holding to me, and drop. If the police ever get us they'll never let us out. It's serious. We can't talk the language. Come!"

He slipped over the sill and Ann, trembling with excitement, climbed out through the window and lowered herself by holds upon Dick's clothing until she was within safe dropping distance to the ground.

When she had dropped and crawled out of Dick's way he leaped down beside her and they slipped around the back of the hotel into a narrow street just as the police came in pompously through the front door.

"Quick!" breathed Dick as Ann turned to look back. "Just keep going. We look suspicious enough just because of our foreign clothes. It wouldn't take long for the police to pick us up."

Dick looked about for a cab, but there was none in sight, so he led Ann around corners and through a maze of streets, taking a blind course, only hoping that he wouldn't end at the Eel-man's hotel.

Coming out into an open plaza he saw a squad of policemen rushing into it from another street. Sensing that they were looking for him, Dick pulled Ann back to the shelter of a building and the police passed without seeing them.

"Narrow escape that!" gasped Dick, running alone into the open square and hailing a cab.

By luck he made the driver understand that he wanted to be driven to the port, and, picking up Ann, he pulled the black curtains of the conveyance as they bounced through the narrow, badly paved streets to the water.

There was a crowd on the pier as they came up. With a rush Dick made his way through, shouting to the captain to get ready to pull out.

Mrs. Huntley was pacing the deck, crying hysterically, and when Ann went aboard she hugged her close, scolding her one moment and kissing her the next.

An officious-looking officer in uniform hurried down the pier, his mustache bristling. He was followed by a squad of soldiers.

"Push off!" Dick cried to the captain. "They've come to arrest us."

The *Searcher* got under weigh just in time, shooting out into the middle of the harbor and making for the open sea.

When their escape was certain, the captain asked Dick: "What did you do? We were wondering where you were. Mrs. Huntley was nearly crazy."

"We bearded the Eel-man in his den," said Dick. "I got back Miss Weyman's ring." He took out the chamolis bag he had wrested from the Eel-man's neck and held it up.

"Well, that's pretty good work. Did you do it single-handed?" asked the captain.

"No, Miss Weyman helped."

"You are lucky to have escaped arrest. Sometimes foreigners are thrown in jail here and never see the light of day again," observed the captain. "It's a barbarous place."

"But we're safe enough now."

"I don't know. They might send a *coastero* after you. They're little government boats that make better time than we do."

"We'll beat them. Besides, they couldn't arrest us if we got to Puerto Rico," said Dick.

"I don't know about that. I think the safest thing we can do is strike for home. We can make Mobile, Alabama, or some such port in thirty hours. Will you ask Miss Weyman what we had better do?"

"Glad of a chance to look up Ann, Dick went to her cabin. She was alone, dressing her disheveled hair.

"You're looking fine," observed Dick as he entered her room and looked at her glowing face. "Excitement does you good. It piles up color in your cheeks."

"I've had almost enough for a while, though," said Ann. "I don't believe I could live on it."

Dick reached into his pocket and brought out the chamolis bag. Stepping close to her, without a word, he gently tilted back her head and pressed a kiss on her trembling lips.

"You'll keep your promise, Ann?" he said softly.

"Yes, Dick," she murmured, her arms closing about him as he drew her close.

It was some time before either of them took note of practical things. Then Ann, gently withdrawing from his embrace, glanced into her mirror and whispered, "Now I'll have to do my hair all over again."

"Then you'll come out with me and announce the engagement?" he urged.

"Yes, dearest. But you've forgotten something."

"What?" asked Dick.

"The ring."

"Oh, yes." He picked up the chamolis bag and for the first time untied the string which closed it tight. With feverish fingers he reached into the bag and brought out a round ball wrapped in rubber tissue.

"He certainly took good care of it," Ann remarked.

"He must have known its value." Dick tore off the rubber coating and took out a round ball which resembled rosin.

A little cry escaped Ann.

"Why, it isn't the ring at all!" she exclaimed.

Dick's face went pale.

"He fooled us!" he cried.

"Break it open. Maybe the ring is inside."

Dick took out his knife and nervously cut the ball in half. There was nothing inside of it.

CHAPTER NINE

A SECOND ATTEMPT

"WHAT do you suppose this stuff is?" asked Dick, smelling of the rosin-like lump.

"I can't imagine. It looks something like sealing-wax."

"He took precious good care of it."

"But where do you suppose the ring is?"

"Heaven knows!" exclaimed Dick. "I shouldn't have jumped at conclusions the way I did. And now I suppose the engagement is all off. I certainly don't deserve any reward for such stupidity."

"Don't worry about the diamond. I don't mind if we never find it. I'd much rather have you than all the diamonds in this whole world."

"Darling," he breathed, crushing her close to him.

She drew away, smiling. "And now you've mussed up my hair again."

With surprising deftness, he helped her arrange her hair and they went out on deck together to exhibit the lump of rosin-like stuff to Mrs. Huntley and Jean Holland.

"What do you suppose it is?" asked Ann.

"He took mighty good care of it."

"I can't imagine," said Mrs. Huntley, interested, and very much crestfallen at the news that the diamond had not been recovered.

"Maybe it's sealing-wax," suggested Jean.

Tony passed by and stopped to inspect the lump with large, curious eyes, reflecting fear of the Eel-man.

"What do you think it, Tony?" asked Dick.

The scared colored man rolled his eyes, and shuffled off to the ship's railing.

"Voodoo stuff," he whispered.

"That's the most plausible explanation yet," laughed Ann. "But what kind of voodoo stuff, Tony?"

"I don't like to talk about it nowadays. I'm afeard of all them things. This is voodoo-land."

"I thought they practised voodoo in Hayti?" said Ann.

"Well, Hayti ain't more than a hundred miles from here, and everybody hereabouts knows all about voodoo," said Tony.

"Tell us something more about it?" asked Ann.

"Ah don't like to talk about it. It gives me a funny feeling at the pit of my stomach. The Eel-man is a sort of priest to the voodoos. I've heard 'em speak about him. Anything he does is all right, and he goes to Hayti once a year for the big voodoo celebration."

"What's that?" asked Ann.

"Nobody knows but the voodoos themselves. But I've heard some tales. Burnt babies, human sacrifices and a great big snake they feed a beautiful young lady like you to every year, Miss Weyman."

"Like me!" laughed Ann. "Mercy! You're terrifying, Tony."

"Oh, let's get out of this horrible country," cried Mrs. Huntley. "It just gives me the shivers."

"Me, too," agreed Jean.

"Not until we get Ann's ring," said Dick.

"You'll have to admit it's exciting," said Ann.

"Yes, but I'd much rather see it all in moving pictures, sitting safely in a New York theater," said Mrs. Huntley.

The captain came up at that moment and joined the party.

"Perhaps you can tell us what this is," Dick suggested, holding out the mysterious lump.

The captain merely glanced at it.

"Why, that's phosphorus," he said. "When I used to work on sailing vessels we took cargoes of it to America. It usually comes in sticks."

"Phosphorus!" exclaimed Dick. "The Eel-man's disguise. That's why he took such good care of it, and had it packed in rubber so the water wouldn't wash it away."

"Evidently he smears himself with it for the ghostly effect it gives at night and in caves, and while swimming," said the captain.

"Tony says it's voodoo stuff."

"That's possible, too. I've heard that the natives sometimes smear their bodies with it in their weird voodoo worshiping celebrations," admitted the captain.

"I wish we could see one of those religious performances," exclaimed Ann. "I've heard so much about them."

"Wait till you get back to Coney Island, my dear," said Mrs. Huntley. "It's much safer. A snake-eating show would be just as exciting, I dare say. At least I'd like it better."

"They don't eat snakes down here; snakes eat people. At least that's what all the natives say. There's one bunch of worshippers down here in Hayti that feed a beautiful young woman to a great big boa-constrictor every season."

"So Tony was just telling us," said Ann, with a shiver.

Dick told the captain about finding the lump of phosphorus in place of the ring and said he would like to go back to San Domingo City and make a second attempt to get the ring.

"It's very risky," said the captain. "Besides, the jails there are like morgues, and they're not at all sanitary. I spent three months in one once when I was a youngster, and I know."

"But we can make a getaway in the launch at any time."

"It's up to Miss Weyman," the captain shrugged his shoulders.

Everybody looked at Ann, and Mrs. Huntley breathed a prayer under her lips that Ann would decide against the foolhardy venture.

"I think it would be very exciting," said Ann after a pause, during which she had studied Dick's face. "New York is a stupid place, and we've got all the time in the world. Maybe we could catch the Eel-man and get him to act as guide to one of those voodoo celebrations in Hayti."

"Horrors!" cried Mrs. Huntley. "I wish there was a train I could take back home."

"If you were the Eel-man, you could swim," suggested Dick smilingly.

CHAPTER TEN

"voodoo!"

After a consultation with the captain, it was decided that the launch would cruise along the shore and, after nightfall, make for San Domingo City again, lying in wait, while Dick and two sailors went ashore to find the Eel-man, or some trace of the ring.

Dick and Ann spent the afternoon lying on steamer rugs in the bow of the boat, making pleasant little plans for the future, and talking about voodoo worship, which seemed an alluring subject, although neither knew much about its actual practice.

"We'll have to get into the interior of Hayti somehow," said Dick, "and witness one of their ceremonies."

"Wouldn't it be wonderful," agreed Ann.

"But very dangerous. They say that no white man has seen one of their ceremonies and come back alive."

"Sounds rather ominous."

"It is one of the oldest negro religions in existence, and practically nothing is known about it," said Dick. "I guess their religious rites are even more barbarous than those of the Egyptians who threw babies to the sacred crocodiles in the river Nile."

"Do you think there really is a sacred snake in Hayti that the natives worship?"

"The captain seemed to know what he was talking about, and I know that a boa-constrictor can squeeze the life out of a man, and afterward swallow him whole; I've even heard they can swallow a cow."

"It seems preposterous," said Ann. "I don't see how they could keep such a snake anyway. He would squeeze all his keepers to death."

"They have great temples built in the mahogany forests, where they go to worship every year, and I remember reading somewhere about a snake den in one of these temples, built entirely of marble and with a special bathing pool in the center for the boa-constrictor, and a tree in it for him to climb. Attendants live there the year around, feed the snake and take care of the temple just the way our big churches are cared for."

"It seems terrible, doesn't it, dear?"

"Yes, but interesting. After we get through with the Eel-man, I think we'll have to try to get a peep at one of these temples."

"But you say the priests might kill any white men who witness their savage orgies, in order to keep their religion a secret."

"We'll have to get our lives insured before we go, then," said Dick lightly, "or maybe we could trade Mrs. Huntley for the privilege of witnessing one of the ceremonials."

"You are perfectly horrid about Mrs. Huntley, Dick. The poor dear has done nothing but sigh ever since you decided to go back after the Eel-man," said Ann.

"She's really having the time of her life. Think how she'll be able to terrify all her friends in her snug little Riverside Drive apartment for years after she gets back."

Tony interrupted the conversation by announcing the dinner. The meal was a gloomy one, Mrs. Huntley sitting stiff, and refusing to converse with any one, Jean being indifferent, and the captain looking worried. Only Dick and Ann seemed natural.

Immediately after dinner, the little boat headed for the lights of San Domingo through the dusk. When a safe

harbor near one of the wharves was found, Dick picked two husky sailors, and took his directions from the captain about signaling if he needed to escape quickly in the boat.

Ann stood on the bow to bid him good-by and wish him good luck. She seemed very nervous, but Dick kissed her confidently.

"I'd feel safer if I were with you," said Ann.

"That's ridiculous," he said. "You stay here, and be a good little girl, and I'll bring you back the scalp of the Eel-man."

"You will be careful, won't you?"

"There's nothing to fear. I could handle half a dozen of those niggers myself. I'm just going to scout around until I get track of the Eel-man again, and maybe I'll look up the American consul, and ask his assistance, if I can't turn the trick single-handed." He gave a signal to the sailors, pressed Ann's hand lightly, jumped up on the wharf, and disappeared in the darkness.

Making his way across the rotten planking, he waited at the entrance to a street until the sailors caught up with him.

"No matter what happens, no shooting to-night," Dick warned his men in a whisper. "It's too dangerous. We'll make first for the *fonda*, where the Eel-man was, and pick up his trail from there."

Dick led the way through the dark, tortuous streets, looking for landmarks he remembered.

They had not gone three blocks from the wharf when the sound of approaching footsteps warned Dick that they must take to hiding. He drew the two sailors into the dark doorway of a nearby house, and they stood breathing tensely, listening to the ominous approach of a score of men, whose footsteps rang on the cobblestone pavement.

A slight, shadowy figure approached from the direction of the wharf, and sought shelter in a doorway right next to Dick's, as the crowd of men came along. One of the sailors started to investigate, but Dick pulled him back.

In a moment the foremost of the approaching crowd became visible, shadowy forms through the darkness. They began to moan a weird, savage chant.

"Voodoo," whispered one of the sailors, and a chill went down Dick's spine at the mention of the word.

There were at least twenty black men in the crowd, and two of them carried torches. Dick leaned forward from his hiding-place to get a look at the ghostly procession.

At that instant one of the leaders saw him and, with a cry for the others to follow, rushed the doorway. Dick and the sailors struck out at the onrushing mob, but they were outnumbered.

A tall, fantastic form wriggled through the fighting mass, the body outlined with glowing phosphorus, and deftly threw a gunny-sack over Dick's head. His fists shot out hopelessly against burlap. The fight was over so far as he was concerned. His hands were tied, and he was pushed out into the street, held and guided by a dozen hands.

As they made their way toward the wharf, and past the doorway where the shadowy figure had taken refuge, a shout went up, and Dick heard the men pounce upon the hiding stranger and drag him along. He did not know what had become of the sailors, but from shouts behind him it seemed that they had taken to their heels. The jargon used by his captors resembled Spanish, but he could not make out a single word, except "Voodoo." The meaning of the sudden attack and capture was beyond him. He stumbled along blindly in the direction he was guided, wishing that he could give a signal to the captain of the *Searcher* to sail out to sea, before the wild mob found the boat, and endangered Ann and the others. But with the gunny-sack over his head, and his hands tied, there was no chance to give a signal.

Behind him he heard shouts of joy and realized that the stranger who had slipped into the other doorway had been captured, and was being taken along by the mob. He wondered if the tall, fantastic figure he had glimpsed for an instant could be the Eel-man. In the confusion of the struggle he had not been able to make sure. If it were the Eel-man, perhaps his capture was not so bad; he might be able to think up some way to outwit him.

"Step up!" a voice in English hissed in his ear.

Dick suited the action to the word, and stumbled over a high railing, slipped down the other side, and was pushed

down a stairway. Through the gunny-sack he could make out a light, and dimly see forms moving about. He felt as though he were in the cabin of a boat, and the sound of lapping water soon convinced him of it.

A minute later another figure bundled up in a gunny-sack was pushed down the stairway and bumped into him. Then the voice in English hissed in his ear, "Make yourself comfortable," and he was suddenly tripped and thrown on the floor.

The second hooded captive was placed in a chair, and then with joking and laughter the men who had brought in Dick and the other person withdrew from the room, slamming the door and locking it after them.

Dick breathed deeply and listened closely; all he could hear was the breathing of the other prisoner. The boat began to roll, and shouts from the deck above assured him that the boat was leaving the harbor. He wanted to speak to the other person in the room, but, fearing that he would be overheard and denied the company of the other captive, he refrained.

Suddenly the smaller figure near him rose from the chair, struggled with the burlap and moved to Dick's side.

For a moment there was a silence.

"Dick! Dick!" came a sudden whisper from the smaller figure. "Is that you?"

"Ann!" cried Dick, recognizing the voice of his sweetheart, and realizing that she was the other prisoner.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE PHOSPHORUS AND THE RING.

ANN tugged at the burlap sack over her head, and finally pulled it off.

"They didn't tie my hands," she explained, stepping to the table in the center of the small cabin, and turning up the wick of a small, smoky lamp.

"How did you get here?" breathed Dick, struggling futilely at the cords about his wrists.

"I followed you," said Ann. "I couldn't bear to stay on the boat alone. I thought you would be in danger."

"It was very foolish," replied Dick.

"I don't think so. At least we are together."

"But God knows what will become of us."

"And I don't care, as long as they don't separate us."

"You darling," breathed Dick. "It isn't so bad after all, I guess."

"Wait till I get you unfastened, and you'll feel better," said Ann, picking up a sharp piece of metal and cutting a hole through the burlap hood on Dick's head. She enlarged the hole and finally pulled it down over Dick's skull till he could see, and breathe freer.

The first thing he did was to kiss Ann. Then they laughed, and Ann began working to loosen the cords at his wrists.

"It's fun to be kidnapped with you," he said.

"I'm glad I followed you, or I wouldn't be here."

"So it was you who slipped into the other doorway when the crowd came along?"

"Yes," said Ann. "I saw you hide, so I did the same."

"And then they discovered you."

"Yes, one of the men with torches lighted me up; I was crouching in a corner, like a scared rabbit."

By this time Ann had succeeded in loosening the cords so that Dick, with one jerk, freed his hands, and pulled off the burlap sack.

He looked around at the dirty, little cabin in which they were imprisoned. A heavy wooden table and two chairs were screwed to the floor in the middle. On one side was a bunk and on the other a huge iron safe, the relic of a century before.

"An old sailing vessel," said Dick.

"I hope they won't bother us. We could make this room quite comfortable," said Ann, looking about the bare cabin.

"It really isn't so bad. But I wonder what they're going to do with us now?"

"Do you suppose—"

Dick broke off, as he heard a sound at the door. There

was the scrape of a key, a metallic sound, and suddenly the door burst open to admit the smiling, wicked face of the Eel-man.

It was all Dick could do to restrain himself from springing at the man. He recalled the struggle in the hotel room, and his disappointment over the diamond.

"Friends," said the Eel-man, in English, with a queer accent, "we meet again."

"I thought you couldn't talk English!" exclaimed Dick.

"I can talk many things, my friends, when I need to," the Eel-man closed the door behind him, and stood grinning down at them sardonically. "I am glad to see you have taken off the bags. I came to help you."

"Very kind of you," sneered Dick.

"I am very kind," replied the Eel-man with a wriggle of his thin shoulders. "You will find that out."

"What are you going to do with us?" asked Dick, abruptly.

"You will be proud of your fate," said the Eel-man.

"We ought to be better judges of that than you. Just what is the idea of this little voyage?" asked Dick.

The Eel-man shook a long finger in Dick's face.

"Wait and see," he replied ominously. "Were you surprised when you found the little lump of phosphorus instead of the ring?"

"Yes," admitted Dick.

"If you have the phosphorus with you, I wish you would return it. It is all I have, and I make good use of it in Hayti."

"We are going to Hayti, then?"

"That is not the question. I asked if you had my phosphorus; I will need it."

"I am sorry, but I left it on the ship," said Dick, mimicking the other's deferential manner.

The Eel-man's face fell.

"That is too bad," he said. "It is hard to get in these parts, but I will content myself with the company of both of you. That should be enough to please me, especially as I never expected to see either of you again." He gave Ann a very personal look which made her recall the night he had kidnapped her in the cab in San Juan.

"Are we to be kept in this cabin during the trip?" asked Dick suddenly.

"Oh, no. You will have the freedom of the boat, now that we are at sea and you are not likely to jump overboard."

"That's good."

"You may make yourselves at home. This is the only cabin on the vessel. We all sleep on deck, but that is our custom; we always treat our sacrifices well."

"Sacrifices!" cried Ann, recalling all the voodoo stories.

A crafty look came into the Eel-man's face. "My English is not good," he said. "Captives, I meant."

"Where do we sleep?" asked Dick, anxious to divert Ann's mind.

"The lady can have the bunk"—the Eel-man pointed to the berth built into the wall—"and you can sleep on the floor, and be her protector. I assure you nothing will happen to you."

"You are very kind," smiled Dick.

"That is my Spanish nature. But you were very thoughtless to leave my lump of phosphorus on the boat."

"I thought maybe the ring was in it," said Dick.

"The ring. The beautiful ring!" laughed the Eel-man, reaching one hand up his long sleeve to his arm-pit and bringing out a flashing object which he displayed before their eyes. "The ring is safe here. I am good at hiding things. You choked me, but you did not find the ring. I have kept it to give as a present to the Most Wonderful."

Ann and Dick both gasped involuntarily at sight of the ring.

"The Most Wonderful!" cried Dick. "Who is that?"

"It is not a person," said the Eel-man, a wild, fervid light dancing in his eyes. "It is the Supreme Being, and this ring will shine from her sacred forehead."

Ann and Dick exchanged significant glances.

"Some heathen god?" asked Dick.

"Some people call it heathen and savage. I call it religious and glorious. Ours is the only true primitive religion in the world."

"And what is your religion?" asked Ann.

"It is called by different names."

"What is one of them?" asked Dick.

"People commonly call it voodooism."

"Voodooism!" cried Ann.

"Yes. You do not like the sound of it?" The Eel-man grinned like a real demon.

"No, I don't!" cried Ann, moving closer to Dick for protection.

"But you know nothing about it."

"I know all I care to know."

"But you will learn more."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean you will be chief witness at one of our ceremonies," said the Eel-man, his eyes glittering. "You will

circumstances," said Dick. "It would be a little difficult to get out of this room, as near as I can see."

"Impossible," agreed Ann.

"Whatever we do, we will have to wait until we get to Hayti. Once we are on land we have a chance."

"But in such a savage, foreign land, it will be hard to do anything, won't it?"

"We will have to get ideas, that's all."

"Why did you tell the Eel-man you didn't have his phos phorus, when I saw you put it in your pocket?"

"I thought we had better keep it for an emergency. If the Eel-man used it with such wonderful effect in awing the natives, I thought possibly it might be of some slight service to us."

"Of course; how very stupid of me. You are a regular



watch us worship our god; in fact, you will take part in it."

"What god do you worship?" asked Ann, horrified.

"The Sacred Snake," said the Eel-man, bowing low.

"The Sacred Snake!" gasped Ann.

"Yes," the Eel-man waved Ann's diamond ring aloft. "I have gone to much trouble in worshipping my god. I took this ring from you to adorn her chaste and beautiful brow, and I took you from the dance to present you to the Sacred Snake, but you got away from me. You will meet the Sacred Snake in Hayti, however. The gods have willed it."

"Beast!" screamed Ann, striking at him with her clenched fist.

The Eel-man twisted through the door with a sardonic laugh and locked it behind him, leaving Dick and Ann, breathing hard, facing each other and their fate.

The man in the grotesque Eel-man costume carried her out to get the air.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE PORT-HOLE.

DICK took Ann in his arms tenderly and whispered:

"Don't be down-hearted, dear, we will find some way to outwit him."

"It isn't that," Ann replied reassuringly. "It's just that I wish we could start our life happily together, instead of having all the worries and being unwilling prisoners."

"I don't see anything to do at present but put up with the

genius, the way you think of everything in advance," smiled Ann.

Dick laughed and went over to the bunk in the wall where Ann was to sleep.

"Do you think you will be comfortable here, dear?" he asked, turning back a dirty blanket.

"The room hasn't a very hygienic aspect, has it?" smiled Ann, looking at the soiled bed-covering.

"You can sleep in your clothes, and I can put my coat over you. I suppose these pirates never have ladies around to suggest cleanliness."

"I don't think I could stand a long siege in this boat. What do you suppose it is, a sailing vessel?" asked Ann.

"Oh, yes, haven't you heard the creaking of the ropes? And there is a certain motion to sailboats I can never mistake." Dick's attention was attracted to a rough square of boards concealed under a moulding at the top of the bunk and he held the lamp up to it to investigate.

A moment later he called to Ann: "Well, here's ventilation, anyway," indicating the place he had been studying.

"What is it?" she asked.

"A crude port-hole or door, open to the sea if we manage to unnaal the thing," answered Dick.

"But won't the water rush in?" queried Ann.

"Not a bit of it. It's too high above the water-line; you see, we are carrying no cargo, and the ship is clear of the water by a good many feet," replied Dick.

"That's fine. Couldn't you wriggle out of that hole and get up on deck?" asked Ann anxiously.

"That's just what I was thinking of. I may be able to, but we've got to work quickly in getting the board out; you see, the Eel-man has the key to our door, and can surprise us at any minute."

"I could stand guard at the door while you worked. It would be good to have the window open just for ventilation," Ann suggested.

"Good idea," said Dick, taking out a heavy pocket-knife which he had carried with him in his search for the Eel-man that night.

While Ann stood guard at the door, Dick slowly worked at the boarded-up port-hole, until at last a low whistle from him brought Ann to his side, relieved to be off her tense watch.

"Look here!" exclaimed Dick proudly, indicating a slit in the boards he had pried apart. "Can you see the water?"

Ann climbed on the bunk and peered through the hole.

"It seems like freedom already!" she exclaimed, looking out on the rolling sea, dimly lit by the moon. "Do you think you could enlarge it enough so you could crawl through it?"

"Yes," answered Dick. "But we don't want the Eel-man or any of the others to discover our secret. They might—"

There was a sudden thump on the door to the cabin and it flew open. Dick and Ann, their hearts pounding, jumped to the floor and faced the Eel-man, who stood grinning at them.

"Getting ready for bed?" asked the Eel-man in a sarcastic tone. "Excuse my abruptness in coming in."

Both Dick and Ann feared that he had surmised their secret, and came to board up the port-hole opening Dick had managed to make. But the Eel-man did not seem to have noticed it and waved his hand toward the door.

A little fat man in a cook's cap came through the doorway bearing a tray laden with fruit and steaming dishes.

"I thought you would like something to eat," said the Eel-man.

Dick and Ann were surprised that such good food should be offered to them, and were a little suspicious.

"We always treat our prisoners well," smiled the Eel-man, "especially when they are to be offered as sacrifices to—"

"Sacrifices!" cried Ann, all the horror of the story of the snake goddess coming to her mind.

"Yes. We would be ashamed to offer thin sacrifices to our god," the Eel-man answered soberly.

Noticing Ann's nervousness, Dick quickly changed the subject, while the little cook set the tray on the center table.

"How long before we reach Hayti?" he asked the Eel-man.

"Who said you were going to Hayti?" the queer being questioned.

"I thought that was understood."

"Well, I don't know why it should be a secret," admitted the other, his eyes growing narrow and cruel.

"Then how long will it be?"

"We are sailing along the shore of it now," admitted the Eel-man. "We land in the morning. That is why you must feast to-night."

"In the morning?" gasped Ann.

"Yes; and I wish you both a good night's rest." The Eel-man made them an elaborate bow, and followed the cook out of the room.

Dick and Ann stood looking at each other in a daze as the door was locked upon them.

"There is no time to be lost," breathed Dick, jumping back to the berth and beginning again to work at the port-hole frantically.

"You don't think he suspects?" queried Ann.

"No," answered Dick. "Probably he doesn't even know of the existence of this old port-hole. It has been nailed up for years."

"Do you think there is any chance of getting away through it?" asked Ann, breathlessly.

"It is our only chance."

"But I can't swim," protested Ann.

"I couldn't make shore in the darkness, either," admitted Dick. "So it would be foolish to go overboard with you."

"Then what is your plan?" asked Ann.

"Wait!" Dick cautioned her, and she stood silent beside him as he pried at the thick boards with his knife.

After half an hour's work at the opening, Dick turned to her and whispered:

"Wrap up some of the food in something, so if he comes back he will think we have eaten it. You had better get something to eat if you can."

"I don't feel hungry," said Ann.

"You will in the morning, and you will need strength. Please eat something, Ann."

Reluctantly she left him, and made an effort at eating, but she was too nervous and excited to need food.

When she returned to Dick, after hiding part of the food, she found that he had enlarged the hole so that it would admit his head, and he was already leaning out of the port-hole, standing tense, seemingly lost in speculation or study.

When Dick drew his head back through the opening, he smiled broadly into Ann's questioning eyes.

"What did you see?" she asked.

"Something that gives me hope." He began to work at enlarging the hole, without another word.

"But if you can make the hole big enough for us to get through, what will we do then?"

"You mustn't forget that they will go to sleep on deck before long; only one watchman will be awake, and from the noise they are making now I think he will probably be too drunk to cause any trouble."

"You don't mean you are going to try to run the boat yourself?" Ann asked wonderingly.

"No. There isn't a chance of that."

"Then what?"

"You remember the Eel-man said we were right off the shore of Hayti," Dick reminded her.

"Yes."

"Well. All we have to do is wait till the crew is asleep and everything is quiet, then I will—"

At that moment there was the metallic sound of a key in the door-lock and Dick and Ann jumped from their places to the table, where they each took up a dish and pretended to be eating.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

IN THE ROWBOAT

This time it was only the cook, come to get the dishes. Both Dick and Ann protested that they had finished, when he saw them apparently eating and signed that he would come back later for the tray. They put their dishes down and insisted that he take them, so they would not be annoyed further during the night.

As the cook started out with the tray, the Eel-man's head appeared through the doorway, and he called out:

"Good-night, amigos. This is the last time anybody will ever say good-night to you again on earth." With an evil leer, he closed the door, and locked it upon them.

"Quick!" cried Dick, listening at the door to the retreating footsteps of the cook and the Eel-man. "Let us barricade the door against further entrance." He jammed one of the chairs against the door and looked about for further obstructing material.

"They were both a little unsteady on their feet," said Ann. "I think the native rum has gone to their heads, and they won't trouble us any more to-night at all."

"The rum is all I am afraid of. It might give them the notion of making us a terrifying call later on." He braced another chair between the stationary table and the one against the door and then returned quickly to his work at the port-hole.

Ann meantime listened to every slight noise from above and tried to imagine just what was going on.

By the time the hole was large enough for Dick to put his shoulders through Ann announced that she had not heard a step on the deck above for ten minutes; that she thought the drunken carouse had ceased and that all the crew had gone to sleep.

"I heard snoring myself," said Dick, getting down from the berth and looking about the cabin.

"Now tell me what we are going to do," Ann breathed tensely. "I have waited very patiently."

"You have been a perfect dear," said Dick, noticing her presence for the first time in many minutes. "I don't see how you could keep so still for such a long time."

"Because we were in danger and I didn't want anything to happen to you, darling," she said.

Their lips met in a kiss and then Dick resumed his active manner, taking Ann's hands and whispering:

"Listen! This is going to be a hard little stunt, but I think we can get away with it. When I first put my head through the port-hole I found that the sailboat is dragging along a little rowboat by a rope tied to the stern. It is the custom of most of these little coast boats, so they can send a party ashore when they are becalmed, and for various other uses of all sorts."

"I see."

"Now, I've just tested the hole, and I can get through it."

"But I haven't tried it!" breathed Ann, jumping up in her excitement to try the size of the hole. "Maybe I can't get through."

"Silly!" laughed Dick. "If my great big hulk can go through yours would slip through easily."

"Oh," said Ann, flushing, "of course. How stupid of me!"

"Now, listen. I'll crawl through the hole, swing up on deck—it's within easy reach—and work my way to the stern through the sleeping men. If I wake one of them, or anything goes wrong, I'll simply run back along the deck till I get above our port-hole, and then pretend to drop overboard; instead I'll slip through the port-hole, and into the room here. There's nothing to fear that I can figure out."

"I'm really not afraid," said Ann, holding his hand. "But isn't it all exciting? I wonder what Mrs. Huntley would say if she were here?"

"I'm glad she isn't. She could never get through the port-hole. I'd have to remove the whole side of the boat."

Ann laughed naturally for the first time and squeezed Dick's hand as a signal for him to continue.

"Well, if nothing happens, I'll reach the stern of the boat all right and pull up the little rowboat by the rope, and drop into it."

"But then the boat will go on without you, and what will become of me?" Ann interrupted.

"No. I'll keep hold of the boat all right. She is moving slowly under a gentle breeze, and her rudder is tied down in her course. I don't believe anybody is on watch at all. They think we're safe enough with the door locked on the outside."

"Oh, yes. We could never get out through that. But go on, Dick. I'm interrupting."

"Well, after I'm in the boat, it will all be smooth sailing. I'll pull myself around, get a good hold on the ship, and pull the boat right under the port-hole, after cutting the painter."

"What's the painter?" asked Ann.

"That's the rope that tows the little boat. I'll work the rowboat around till I'm right below the port-hole, and you'll be looking out, waiting for me."

"Oh, lovely," Ann patted her hands together softly. "It will be just like Romeo and Juliet."

"But there'll be a little more danger," Dick warned her.

"What do I care for danger when I'm with you?"

"Well, let's hope everything will turn out all right," breathed Dick. "It must be nearly morning now, though. We haven't a minute to lose. Do you understand everything?"

"Yes. Except what are we going to do after we are in the rowboat? I've always been afraid in little boats way out in the middle of the great big ocean," pouted Ann.

Dick pressed her hand.

"I've been studying that," he said. "We aren't far out at sea at all; we are just skipping along close to shore, not more than two miles out. I saw a light on shore when I was looking out a while ago. We can row to shore, hide the boat, and—"

"Be cannibals!" suggested Ann, again entering into the spirit of the adventure.

"Let us hope it won't be as bad as that, but Hayti is pretty wild in some spots, and we may have to live like Adam and Eve for a while."

"Oh, won't that be fine!" cried Ann. "And maybe we can find a voodoo serpent for a pet and then everything will be just like the Garden of Eden. I'd like that."

"Let's hope we don't find a serpent the size of the Eel-man's voodoo goddess," Dick reminded her.

"Oh, wouldn't that be awful!" cried Ann, becoming sober instantly. "But do hurry. I understand everything."

"Remember, the minute I have climbed through the port-

hole you get ready to crawl out. It will take me a few minutes, but everything depends upon your being ready."

"Yes, Dick. I understand. I'll be waiting."

They exchanged a nervous, hurried kiss, and Dick climbed to the berth, slowly drawing himself through the port-hole, and pulling himself to the deck of the boat.

Ann stood trembling, watching as his legs disappeared and she heard him crawling cautiously to the deck. She heard no more as he lay still just above her, getting his breath and his bearings. Then she heard him move slowly toward the stern of the boat, and after that, for fear of missing the rowboat they were to escape in, Ann put her head through the port-hole and gave herself a little lift just to see how it would actually feel to crawl through the hole. It was plenty large enough for her and, looking down at the water, she realized it was close enough so that Dick could reach up and help her through the window and into the boat. She felt a distinct thrill at the thought of his strong arms around her, lifting her into the boat, which he would row to safety.

It was the most thrilling adventure she had ever heard of, much more exciting than anything she had ever read, seen or dreamed of, and to think that she was the heroine of it and Dick the hero. It was almost too good for words. Yet as she thought about it, there was still a great deal of danger lying directly ahead and she knew that she must not get to dreaming about the romance of the situation before they had reached a port of safety.

Craning her neck, she looked back to the stern of the boat and made out the rowboat Dick had told her about. It was very dark, the moon had almost gone down, and she became frightened as she stared into the black waters. Dick had not yet reached the boat. She strained her eyes to see him, but the rowboat rocked alone over the waves, like a little child holding to its parent's hand.

Why didn't Dick come? Had anything happened? She thought of a thousand things which might have occurred. What was the matter? Had something gone wrong? She continued staring through the dark at the little boat, and praying that Dick was safe, and would come for her.

But minutes passed and he did not come. The minutes seemed to be hours. She fidgeted and worried and prayed and listened for noises. The ship was as silent as a grave, and yet Dick did not come for her. What kept him waiting, what could have happened?

Suddenly, as she watched, Ann saw the little skiff behind the sailboat gradually come closer through the dark. At first she could not believe her eyes. It all seemed like a dream, but then slowly and surely it moved along the side of the vessel.

She could not see Dick. She caught her breath and made ready for her part.

The little black boat stopped just below the port-hole, and a hand stole up silently through the dark.

"All right, Dick," Ann whispered, lifting herself through the window and into the strong arms waiting below.

The arms gave her a strange, uncanny sensation. They seemed longer and thinner than Dick's.

A chill stole through every fiber of her being.

The moon at that instant gave forth a last bit of light before setting, and Ann's feet touched the bottom of the rowboat.

She shook with a nervous chill, and stared fascinated into the eyes the moon illuminated.

"*Dick! Dick!*" screamed Ann, fighting at the terrible figure which held her in its arms, grinning down into her blanched, white face.

"*Dick! Dick!*" she screamed. "For God's sake, help! The Eel-man has got me!"

Fainting, she collapsed in the bottom of the boat.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

IN THE CAVE

As Ann screamed and fell to the bottom of the boat, at the Eel-man's feet, a dark form hurled itself from the deck of the sailboat, struck the Eel-man squarely in the chest, and sent him flying into the dark water.

Ann came to abruptly with the shock, and made out the black form which had leaped from the deck and knocked the Eel-man into the water. The man was pulling himself together, and groping about for the oars in the bottom of the boat.

Ann cowered back in the stern, dazed, not knowing what had happened or what to expect.

"Sit still and steer for that black line," Dick's voice suddenly came to her, and she realized that the black form of which she had been so distrustful was really Dick.

Without questioning, she took up the work of guiding the rowboat with the little ropes attached to the rudder beneath the stern. Dick slipped the oars into the locks, and pulled away from the ship, as those aboard, awakened by the shouting, began to curse and move in the darkness.

"Steer straight, Ann, and keep your eyes out for the Eel-man," Dick called to the girl.

A shiver shot through Ann at the mention of the horrible creature who had held her in his arms but a minute before.

Dick pulled with all his might, seemingly making double time, as the boat was sailing in the opposite direction. He heard splashing in the water and realized that the crew were making strenuous efforts to save the Eel-man, whom he had so unexpectedly knocked into the water.

"Making any headway?" he asked Ann, after he had rowed out of hearing of the sailing vessel.

"Yes. The dark shore line seems nearer. But it's so gloomy I can't see," she replied.

"Let's thank our lucky stars it is dark. They'd be following us by now if it weren't."

Ann suddenly sat up stiff in a listening attitude.

"What's that splashing noise?" she asked in a horrified tone.

Dick rested on his oars for an instant, making out the even strokes of a strong swimmer not far astern.

"Nothing!" he whispered tensely to Ann, returning to his oars and rowing like one possessed, for instinct told him that the strong swimmer was no other than the Eel-man, who was said to outdistance boats in swimming.

With grim determination, Dick pulled at the oars, using all the skill he had, and making as good time as he had ever made. The sound of splashing fell behind, but was still present.

"We are gaining on him," Ann cried breathlessly.

"You know who it is, then?" cried Dick.

"Yes. Don't you remember how he swam that night after he stole my ring and struck you?"

"I evened up for the slap just now!" exclaimed Dick, gritting his teeth and bending to the oars.

"How, Dick?" asked Ann, who was burning with curiosity to know how Dick had saved her from the clutches of the Eel-man, and what had happened just before that, so the Eel-man had met her instead of Dick.

"There isn't time to tell you now. How is the shore line?" Dick asked abruptly.

"Oh, much nearer!" gasped Ann, surprised herself that in such a short time they had made so much distance.

"Weeeoooo!" a terrible scream from behind them rang across the waters, congealing the blood of both Ann and Dick and making Dick throw every last ounce of his energy and strength into his pull at the oars.

"Wasn't that awful!" gasped Ann.

"Sounded like a lost soul!" shivered Dick.

"Some terrible water animal. What do you suppose it was?" Ann tried to control the break in her voice.

"Listen! Can you hear the splashing behind us?" asked Dick.

"Only faintly," replied Ann.

"Then it was the Eel-man, giving up the pursuit and signaling to the ship that he was going to rejoin it."

"Are you sure, Dick?"

"No. But it seems likely."

"But that wasn't a human voice!"

"And the Eel-man isn't entirely human. You've said so yourself," Dick reminded her.

"I never heard such a terrible scream in all my life," said Ann, with a shiver.

"Neither did I. But the Eel-man has got cause to bellow like that, after losing a nice little sacrifice to his sacred serpent, getting the breath knocked out of him and being thrown into the water besides."

"But he's so much at home in the water, that couldn't have bothered him at all," said Ann.

"An ordinary man would have drowned."

"What happened, anyway? I must have fainted," said Ann. "The last I remember was looking into his eyes and screaming to you for help, Dick. What did happen?"

"It was your screaming which made me decide to jump on him, even if I killed myself," said Dick.

"But why was he in the rowboat and you on deck?" Ann asked.

"Watch the shore, Ann. I haven't time to explain now. Wait till we get to a place of safety. Are we any nearer?" "Oh, lots!" she cried, "I can see trees, or what looks like them. Why, I can see pretty well. Dawn is coming."

"Dawn!" cried Dick, redoubling his energies at the oars. "They'll see us from the boat."

"They must know we made for shore, anyway."

"Yes. I don't know why the Eel-man didn't follow us farther, knowing we were making for shore."

"Maybe he was winded after that knock-out."

"I hope so."

"Oh, look, I'll steer for it!" cried Ann, staring ahead through the darkness.

"What's that?" asked Dick.

"Some kind of a little stream. I guess I see it right. It looks like the outlet of a little creek."

"Good enough. Steer for it. It will be a good place to hide the boat," replied Dick.

A moment later Dick's oars struck the bottom.

"Getting shallow!" he exclaimed, pausing to look around.

"We're in the mouth of the stream already."

"Keep in the middle, Ann, we don't want to go aground until we're well hidden."

"All right," she answered, thankful that the growing dawn made her course easier.

Dick rowed for half a mile up the channel and then asked Ann to look for a thicket or some place where the boat could be concealed.

In a few minutes she discovered one, the boat was steered ashore and Dick helped Ann out onto hard ground. For a moment he held her in his embrace as they gazed together at the rosy rim of the heavens rippling into dawn.

"Isn't it perfect!" breathed Ann.

"I wish our course for the next few hours or days were as happy as the dawn," said Dick.

"But we are safe now. We have got away from them, and we are on land," said Ann.

"But a strange land of strange customs; the only civilized place in Hayti is Port au Prince, and I wouldn't trust that too far for evidences of real civilization."

"But, Dick, we can live like Adam and Eve now." Ann tried to cheer him with an effort.

"I know, dear, but there are always serpents in the Garden of Eden," he said, drawing up the boat and pushing it into the concealment offered by a dense undergrowth near the edge of the stream.

"What are we going to do now?" asked Ann.

"Try to find one of the few civilized spots in Hayti and get breakfast," answered Dick.

"Breakfast?" cried Ann. "Why, we've plenty of that." She reached into the bottom of the boat and took out a little bundle. "I'd forgotten all about it; this is some of the fruit and food you told me to wrap up last night, so the Eel-man would think we had eaten it. I put it in my waist before I dropped into the rowboat, knowing we'd have trouble finding meals in the wilds. It dropped out when I fainted."

"Good enough!" Dick kissed her emphatically. "You will make a wonderful wife, Ann. I never knew any one so resourceful."

"And now let's find a safe place for breakfast," she said, skipping ahead of him through a break in the jungle.

"Not too near the boat," Dick cautioned her. "If they look for us they will probably find the boat first."

"I've a notion they won't even try to find us," said Ann. "Maybe so, but I won't feel safe until we get to some place that looks as though it offered a little protection. All I've got in the way of weapons is my knife and the Eel-man's little chunk of phosphorus."

"Those don't sound so very terrible, do they?" smiled Ann, leading the way into the tropical forest.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

A CRY IN THE DARK.

AFTER an hour's walk, they came to a place which seemed ideal. The sun, which had now come out, lighted up a beautiful hillside cut into a series of caverns, which looked warm, dry and inviting.

Throwing themselves down at the mouth of one of these caves they opened the package of food and began to eat.

"Now tell me what happened after you crawled through the port-hole," said Ann, her appetite somewhat appeased. "I didn't hear a thing."

"There was nothing to hear," said Dick. "I made my way across the deck; everybody was asleep and in half a minute I had hold of the painter of the rowboat. I gave it a little pull to bring it in when a sentry asleep on the deck beside me rolled over and I crouched down, afraid that I had awakened him. I remained quiet for a minute or two to assure myself that he really hadn't awakened. Then I reached out again for the painter, and it was gone."

"Good gracious!"
"I looked over the stern for the rowboat and it was gone, too!"

"How exciting!" Ann interrupted.

"I didn't know what to make of it. The boat had been there but a moment before."

"And all that time I was waiting for you and wondering what had happened," put in Ann.

"You were a brave little girl."

"Nothing brave about that. I didn't have anything else to do. So I just waited."

"Well, when I missed the boat I immediately thought of the wily Eel-man. I looked around the deck and everything was quiet, except for snoring. But I suddenly heard a splash of water at the side of the boat. Crawling along the deck, I peered over the edge and made out the black little rowboat rocking on the waves. It was moving slowly toward the port-hole. I followed, and got to the port just as you were lifted into the boat. Then I heard your screams and knew for the first time what had happened."

"But I don't understand yet, Dick," said Ann.

"Neither do I, except that the Eel-man, who is very cautious, knew that the only way we could escape from the vessel was by the rowboat, so he went to sleep in it by himself, to cut off all chance of its use as a means for a getaway."

"Oh, I see, and your pulling at the rope woke him up."

"That's the way I figured it out, and with his suspicious nature, he untied the rope while I was watching the sentry; maybe he even peered over the deck and saw me. Anyway, he knew something was wrong, so he started out on a little personal cruise along the side of the ship to try and find out what was up that he didn't know about."

"I see," put in Ann, "and, of course, when he came to our port-hole I thought it was you and insisted on jumping into his arms and being helped into the boat. Poor thing, he couldn't have helped it at all. It must have surprised him just as much as it did me when I looked into his evil face."

"Thank God, I had presence of mind enough to jump on him and knock him out of the boat," said Dick. "If I hadn't—he breathed deeply and clasped Ann's hand—"he might have been eating breakfast with you in one of these caves instead of I."

"Oh, Dick, how can you say such a thing?"

"I know our friend the Eel-man," answered Dick, seriously.

Having fixed breakfast, both being utterly worn out with the night's excitement, Ann suggested that they sleep on the rocks in the sun.

"I don't think it's very wise. We had better go into one of the caves. If any little scouting party comes along they might pick us up."

"But there must be snakes in the caves."

"I don't think so," said Dick. "There are few native snakes on islands, you know. I'll look around."

He crawled into the cave nearest at hand and lighted matches for inspection. Finding it perfectly dry and free from pests of any nature, he called Ann in and helped fix for her a bed of sweet grass, pulled at the mouth of the cavern.

After Ann had finally gone to sleep, Dick remained on watch in the dark cave for several hours, and then, finally convinced that they were safe from pursuit for the time being, he fell to sleep under a tree.

Utterly exhausted, the two adventurers slept like children all through the day.

Ann was first to waken, and it was several moments before she could be sure of her whereabouts. The cave was dark and it was already dusk outside. At last she remembered the terrible night they had spent, and made out Dick's form lying near her.

Drawing close to him, she whispered:

"Dick!"

In an instant he was awake, shaking off sleep and crying:

"What? What is it, Ann?"

"We've been sleeping awfully long," Ann said gently, caressing his troubled brow.

"Oh," he exclaimed with a sigh of relief. "I was so bothered. Your calling reminded me of last night when you screamed for help from the boat. I must have been dreaming of the Eel-man. How long have you been awake?"

"Just a minute."

"It's nice here, isn't it?" remarked Dick, looking about the dim, shadowy cave.

"Almost a home."

"Whoever thought we would begin housekeeping in such primitive style?" asked Dick, with a laugh.

"It is regular Adam and Eve, isn't it?"

"Only Adam never had such a beautiful Eve."

"And how about Eve?" Ann reminded him shyly.

"Oh, any man will do."

"Nonsense!" she exclaimed.

They were silent for several moments. Finally Dick sat up, and asked abruptly:

"Well, what are we going to do now?"

"It's too late to stumble about in the jungle in search of a town or village," said Ann.

"Yes. It would be rather risky in the dark."

"I shouldn't like that at all," admitted Ann.

"We seem to have eluded pursuit all right."

"Perhaps they didn't follow us at all."

"Yes, that's possible," agreed Dick. "The Eel-man seemed to be in a hurry to get to his precious voodoo Sacred Snake ceremony. I suppose that only happens once a year on a fixed date of some sort, and he couldn't afford to be late."

"I'm glad we're not to be the pet sacrifices," smiled Ann.

"So am I. Life is too pleasant."

"Do you really suppose he would have done something of the sort?" Ann asked nervously, after a pause.

"From my observation of the Eel-man, he would do anything, absolutely anything," answered Dick.

"He certainly is a terrifying person. I'm glad he's miles away." Ann moved to a more comfortable position on her heap of grass and stretched herself out languorously.

Dick moved closer and put his arm around her.

Suddenly a terrible screaming yell broke the silence—half-animal, half-human, very much like the yell they had heard on the water, when the Eel-man was swimming after them.

"What's that?" cried Ann, sitting up.

Dick was instantly on his feet.

Both listened in a strained attitude. It was too dark to see, but Dick, knowing something of the wilds, scanned the darkness for a pair of glowing coals, the eyes of some strange animal. He could see nothing. The cry was not repeated.

Both remained in a tense listening attitude for several minutes, but there was nothing but silence.

At last the cry came to them again, but from a greater distance, several miles away, it seemed.

"Thank goodness!" cried Dick, dropping down to his couch.

"Whatever it was, it's gone on."

"It was terrible, wasn't it?"

"I never heard an animal make a noise like that, unless it was in great pain," said Dick.

"Do you think it was an animal?"

"What else could it have been?"

"The Eel-man!"

"The Eel-man!" cried Dick. "I hope he isn't as near as this."

"We haven't been far away from him for very long at a time since he stole the diamond." Ann reminded him.

"Yes, I know," admitted Dick. "But I certainly hope he's a hundred miles from here."

"I do, too. But there was something suggestive of him in that wild scream," said Ann.

"There certainly was," Dick admitted.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

DAWN

THEIR peace of mind disturbed by the strange cry, it was some time before either could be calm again. The night came on and they grew hungry. There was nothing left to eat, and to try to forget their troubles and pass the time until morning, they spent an hour in talking about the strange mishaps and adventures that had occurred to them on the romantic trip to the Caribbean.

"Anyway, it brought us together, Ann," Dick reminded her, when she spoke a bit gloomily.

"Yes, and we shall enjoy each other for life. That is, if we ever get out of this alive."

"I wouldn't worry about that, dear," Dick reassured her. "The Eel-man has missed our trail, even if it was he who screamed a while back. All we have to do is wait until it is light enough to sally forth and find a civilized town in this uncivilized country."

"Won't that be hard?"

"Perhaps."

"Are there many big cities in Hayti?"

"Only one or two. The thing for us to do very early in the morning is to look for a path or road which surely will lead us to a town. Hayti is fairly well populated in villages, and this seems like a good farming country around here, although it may not be inhabited."

"We ought to get somewhere and telegraph Mrs. Huntley and the captain that we are safe," Ann reminded him.

"Yes, I suppose they are worrying their heads off while we're lying here as snug as two bugs in a rug."

"It is a rather pleasant adventure after all. I think I'll take a nap, Dick, so I'll be fresh in the morning. We'll probably have to walk all day long," said Ann.

"Good idea, girlie. Make yourself comfy and I'll stay up to keep the mosquitoes away."

"I hope there'll be nothing worse."

"Don't worry. Go to sleep," Dick answered, sitting up with his back against the wall of the cave and his eyes fixed on the opening, while Ann stretched herself out at his side and fell into fitful slumber.

Dick sat this way for two hours, planning what was best to do in the morning and what to avoid. He considered carefully the question of following the first path or road which they came upon. It seemed risky to follow any road. But, at the same time, there was no chance to get food unless they did find a town of some sort. He wished ardently that he had read more about Hayti, and were prepared to cope with the situation, but his knowledge of the country was limited, and he must trust to what little he could remember from chance tales and hearsay.

At last he made out a grayish hue through the cavern entrance, and a cool breeze blowing up suggested that dawn was about to break.

The opening grew lighter and lighter, until at last he could make out the outline of trees and bushes.

He waited a few minutes until faint streaks on the horizon for the news that the sun was about to rise, then he gently touched Ann, and whispered:

"It's time to wake up, dear."

Ann did not awaken as easily as Dick had, but when her eyes did open and see the dawn her lips parted in a tender smile.

"Oh, how lovely, Dick!" she exclaimed. "We are just in time to see the sun rise."

"Yes. It will be fine after the long night."

"Didn't you sleep at all?"

"Not a wink."

"It was very selfish of me to fall off asleep and leave you to watch over me."

"You don't know how much I enjoyed it," said Dick. "It was a very rare and precious experience."

"Then I will kiss you good-morning, as a good wife-to-be should," said Ann, standing up.

After a brief but fervent embrace they stepped out of the cave together and stood looking at the glorious sun which was just peeping over the edge of the jungle.

"There is nothing quite so enheartening as daylight," Ann remarked happily.

"It does kind of cheer a fellow up," remarked Dick. "Especially after the long night."

"I feel as though I could walk a thousand miles right now," exclaimed Ann exuberantly.

"You will not have to."

"Oh, Dick. Wouldn't it be fine to have some of Tony's ham and eggs and cornbread?"

"I'd rather have some of his pancakes," admitted Dick. "But I guess we won't have much trouble getting a little breakfast. I know that there are a score of good fruits growing wild in this country, and all we'll have to do will be to pick our breakfast off the trees."

"How wonderful! I've always wanted to do that."

"We might as well begin now, so we'll have enough breakfast by dinner-time anyway."

With clasped hands they made their way through the slight undergrowth, searching the surrounding trees for fruit.

"Hurrah!" shouted Dick, leaping into the air to pluck a yellow orange from a tree overhead. "Here's a ripe orange, fresh from the grove. You couldn't want anything better than that for breakfast, Ann." He took out his knife and peeled off the thick skin, then held it temptingly before Ann's bright, red lips.

She bit deep into the orange and then jumped back, her face puckered into a knot.

"What's the matter?" cried Dick.

"Ugh!" she shuddered. "It's so terribly sour! Worse than a lemon! Taste of it yourself."

Dick gingerly licked the pulp and made a wry face.

"I guess I've heard that wild oranges are usually or always bitter," he admitted.

"I thought you were bragging about your wild fruits?" Ann laughed at his embarrassment.

"Just wait. We'll try another." He looked ahead and made out a tree laden with big brown objects. "Those look like mangoes!" he cried, running ahead and pulling off several large and tempting mangoes.

"You'll have to taste them first," laughed Ann, coming up to his side as he was cutting open one of the mangoes.

Dick tasted the fruit, smacked his lips and swallowed the other half with much satisfaction.

"The best in the world!" he exclaimed. "Try one."

Ann took the proffered mango and was delighted with its flavor. After gathering a great heap they sat down on the grass like children and made a feast of the luscious mangoes.

"Well, so far, being cast away on an isle has been very pleasant," remarked Ann.

"I should say so," agreed Dick, finishing the last mango he could stand and putting away his knife.

"I never had such a good breakfast."

"Nor I."

"I suppose we'd better get along now. How many miles do you think we'll have to walk, Dick?"

"Maybe a long way."

"I wish we could take the mango tree along."

"We'll find lots of them," Dick reassured her.

They started out again, this time hunting for some sort of path or evidence of human occupation.

After several hours of rough trail-making Dick gave a cry of pleasure as he suddenly stumbled onto a small path through the jungle. On examining the marks on the earth he found that barefooted men had recently passed that way.

"It looks rather bad," he remarked to Ann. "None of them have shoes on. I suppose they're negroes."

"But none of the natives here wear much more than sandals," Ann remarked. "I think we're lucky to find the path."

"I wonder where it leads and which way we ought to go?"

"Let's go the way the footprints did," suggested Ann. "Then we're sure to find a human being some time."

"I wouldn't mind seeing a man of any sort, even if he were a cannibal," said Dick. "The wilderness certainly gets on one's nerves."

Following the path, they soon came to a clearing where a lot of palm trees had recently been cut down.

"I believe we're near a town," said Dick. "A good many of these palms have been cut down for some commercial reason or other. We ought to find a road near here."

He hurried ahead and suddenly waved his arms victoriously, crying to Ann: "A road! A real road!"

She came running up breathless. "Oh, isn't it wonderful to be on a real road again!"

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

A STRANGE CITY

AS they struck into the road their pace increased; they hurried along, looking far ahead, hoping, wondering what would be ahead beyond each curve in the road.

"You'd think we'd been lost in the woods for a month the way we hurry to get to a town," laughed Ann.

"I couldn't live on mangoes all my life," said Dick. "Besides, I'm out of tobacco."

"I suppose you couldn't get that in the wilderness?"

"No. There certainly are advantages in civilization. We'll live in a house when we're married, Ann."

"Not a cave. I agree with you."

As they turned the next bend in the road a hill ahead came to view and nestling in the center of the hill they made out a stone building, gleaming in the sun.

"A house!" cried Ann.

Dick made out other buildings through the jungle.

"A whole town!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, yes. Lots of houses!" exclaimed Ann.

"And people!" cried Dick, seeing several lightly dressed natives at work in the distance.

"Well, this certainly is good luck," breathed Ann.

In five minutes more they had reached the outskirts of the town and were hurrying into a broad, paved highway.

"Funny there aren't more people about," remarked Dick. "These are wonderful houses, almost mansions."

"They're like palaces, Dick!" Ann corrected him, stopping before a beautiful building of white marble.

"This must be Port au Prince. I really didn't know it was such a beautiful place."

Suddenly they heard the muffled strains of weird and beautiful music coming toward them. The music had a plaintive Oriental charm and neither Dick nor Ann had ever heard anything like it.

"Isn't it beautiful," said Ann. "There must be a parade going on or something like that."

"I hope it isn't a funeral," smiled Dick.

"Maybe it's a circus."

"That music explains why we don't see more people. They must have all turned out for some kind of celebration."

Ann caught Dick's arm and squeezed it happily as they walked along, the music coming nearer and nearer.

"Isn't it great that we are out of the jungle again, in a civilized town with beautiful buildings and the Eel-man a thousand miles away," Ann said with enthusiasm.

"I guess we have nothing to fear from the Eel-man here," agreed Dick. "It's certainly nice to get a free breath."

"There's the music, Dick. Just around the corner. Hear the footsteps! It must be a parade, or a procession of some sort."

At that instant three men carrying a pole thirty feet high turned the corner and advanced at a solemn pace toward Dick and Ann, who drew back to the side of the street to let the procession pass.

The men were dressed in loincloths with long streamers in their hair which twisted and turned and writhed like snakes.

"Oh, see what they're carrying!" cried Ann, shrinking back and grabbing Dick's arm for protection.

He had realized what the men were carrying at the same instant Ann did and stood trembling, not knowing what to do.

Coiled about the notched pole was a huge swollen snake, its head thrust out near the top of the pole. It was hissing hideously and running out its forked tongue. It was chained to the pole.

"The Sacred Snake!" gasped Ann.

"Yes, madam," a voice hissed in her ear, and she turned to look into the crafty eyes of the Eel-man.

Dick sprang at the man, but a dozen attendants grabbed him and held his hands and feet.

He stood defiant before his enemy.

"And you, monsieur," smiled the Eel-man, smirking at Dick. "We welcome you both to the celebration of the Sacred Snake."

He held up his hand as a band of gaily attired musicians turned the corner. The music stopped instantly and the procession came to an abrupt halt at the order of the commander.

The Eel-man addressed the marchers in a native jargon and at the end of his short speech he turned suavely to Ann and Dick, who stood dazed by their sudden capture. The marchers shouted with joy and began to dance as he finished his short address.

"I was just telling them," the Eel-man explained to Dick and Ann in English, "that we would have a white woman to sacrifice to the Sacred Snake to-day. I had promised them this, but you got away and I had no time to hunt you, because I am the high priest here and the Sacred Snake has shed her skin and the ceremony must not be delayed. The Sacred Snake is hungry."

Ann shivered and tried to stand up straight, but involuntarily she shrank back against the wall, her eyes fixed in terror on Dick, who stood as one stunned, utterly unable to move.

The Eel-man gave a curt order and two huge negroes grabbed Ann and pushed her in front of the procession. Dick made one lunge to free himself as they carried Ann off, but he was powerless in the grip of a score of strong hands.

"Beast!" Dick hissed at the Eel-man.

"Amigo," said the Eel-man mockingly, recalling the fond Dick had trapped him into opening his door at the *fonda*.

"This is an unexpected pleasure. I did not want to disappoint my friends, who look to me for a great celebration every year. I see you were not frightened with my yelling last night."

"You couldn't frighten me with your childish voodoo tricks," Dick answered solemnly, looking straight into his eyes.

"Hoh-he," laughed the Eel-man. "We shall see. I have friends here. Thousands of them." He waved his hand down the street, black with his religious followers awaiting his slightest command. "You will have a hard time of it," the Eel-man smiled.

It seemed to Dick that he was right, but he kept his eyes open and made a careful observation of everything which might be of use to him in an attempt to escape.

At an order from the Eel-man, the procession started again; Dick was pushed into line behind Ann and the music started. Dick gradually worked his way closer to Ann and whispered:

"Keep your courage."

"Yes, Dick," she answered falteringly, peering over her shoulder at the terrible boa-constrictor hissing high in the

air and seeming to enjoy the ceremony as much as any of the religious enthusiasts.

The Eel-man saw Dick speak to Ann and hurried forward to walk at his side.

"There is no use trying to plan anything. It will only make it worse for you," the Eel-man cautioned.

Dick did not answer.

"It will all be over very shortly," said the Eel-man. "We are now approaching the main temple. All these buildings you see are temples consecrated to voodooism."

Dick and Ann were both mildly interested even in their extremity to learn just what the jungle town was.

"I suppose you thought you had reached a city when you got here," the Eel-man laughed, divining their thoughts. "Well, it was a very bad city for you to come to at just this time."

He pointed ahead to one of the large marble buildings Ann and Dick had noted on their entry into the town.

"That is the main temple," said the Eel-man. "It is there that we observe the rites to the Sacred Snake. You will find it very amusing and interesting. I am sure."

"Ugh!" exclaimed Ann. "You sicken me."

"You will be more sick when you see what is about to happen to you within the temple."

The Eel-man seemed to take a vicious delight in tormenting Ann and Dick, now that they had no way to get back at him. He pointed up to the head of the Sacred Snake on the pole.

"Do you recognize your diamond?" he asked in a jeering tone.

At the mention of the diamond which had caused most of the trouble both Dick and Ann turned their heads involuntarily.

There, glistening in the sun, on the hideous head of the reptile they made out the sparkle of a diamond.

"It is yours," the Eel-man laughed. "I brought it as an offering to our goddess. She was very happy with it. See how proudly she holds her head, just like an aristocratic woman. But she is more than that, she is the source of all good in the world."

"And you are her high priest!" scoffed Dick, deigning to speak to the revolting Eel-man for the first time since they had been forced into the heathenish procession.

"I am a true believer, and I know the forms to play at the religious ceremonies; that is why all these marching natives have come to trust and fear me."

"I can well believe that," said Dick.

"If I only had my lump of phosphorus they would like me better, especially at night, but you were thoughtless enough to forget to bring it along," said the Eel-man.

At the mention of the phosphorus Dick had the sudden glimmering of an idea, and he kept considering it as he walked along, an unwilling participant in the horrid ceremony.

Ann seemed to sense that Dick had something important on his mind and said nothing, while the Eel-man made occasional remarks which neither of them paid any attention to.

In a few moments they reached the steps to the principal temple, and as they ascended them the massive doors above swung silently open, held in place by a dozen black men in scarlet dress, who danced from one foot to the other and chanted a strange, monotonous song.

Ann and Dick were pushed into the center of the great hall, and stood at last together at the railing about a huge cage in which stood a tree made of jasper, or some shining mineral. The cage itself was a work of art, made of glittering copper wires through which bands of pure silver wires were stretched at intervals; it was thirty feet in circumference and twenty feet in height. The interior of the temple was impressively beautiful in its simple architecture and rich, barbarous adornments. Near where they stood there was an open gate in the wire which two attendants guarded.

Dick and Ann stood close together and watched moodily as the procession wound into the room and came to a stop at the center, surrounding the pole to which the snake clung.

The Eel-man suddenly pushed his way through the throng

and mounted a small platform beside the great decorated cage.

He began to leap up and down with hysterical frenzy and then to shout in a strange jargon.

Ann shook in every fiber of her body as she listened to the barbarous outburst. Soon the natives began dancing and shouting with the Eel-man and the whole hall was filled with wild, savage, blood-congealing sounds. The Sacred Snake wriggled on its pole, hissed and shot out its red tongue. Ann, pale, nearly fainting, shrunk back against Dick for protection, but two guards tore her rudely away from Dick and a dozen others rushed her suddenly to the platform where the Eel-man was ranting and lifted her upon it, holding her, struggling at the Eel-man's dancing feet.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

ALONE WITH THE SACRED SNAKE

AT sight of the white woman captive the throng of religious fanatics burst into another demoniac frenzy of religious enthusiasm.

Dick clutched the knife in his pocket and sprang forward, but black hands quickly pulled him back and held him easily in spite of his straining to reach Ann's side.

The Eel-man waved his hands over Ann's head, and mumbled some weird form of incantation, at which there was a new outburst of fanatical frenzy from his followers.

The great snake pole was lifted on high and a procession formed in the heathen temple, walking around in a circle, the Eel-man and Ann in the center. As they passed the platform each devotee made a jeering grimace at Ann, who finally closed her eyes and remained taut and tense, prepared for the worst. She could not imagine that even such fiendish cruelty as the Eel-man's would lead him to actually offer her as a living sacrifice to the terrible Sacred Snake. Yet she knew that his barbarity knew no bounds and that yearly he performed such savage feats to keep his hold on the superstitious natives who worshiped him and his atrocities no less than the Sacred Snake.

At last the procession came to a halt and three men bearing the Sacred Snake on the pole advanced toward the gate opening into the cage.

They lowered the pole and thrust it through the gate with the greatest of ceremony.

All eyes were centered on the boa-constrictor as it was gently laid on the ground of its cage and unfastened. With slow wriggles it moved off the pole and slowly, sinuously climbed the stone tree which had been built as its altar. At last, when it had reached the top it thrust out its head, Ann's diamond gleaming upon it and darted out its red tongue, hissing horribly at the worshipers in the temple.

They burst into a wild riot of shouting and dancing at this, and even Dick closed his eyes to shut out the barbarous spectacle.

"Makes you a little sick to your stomach, doesn't it?" the Eel-man hissed in his ear.

Dick opened his eyes to find that the fellow had left the platform and was standing beside him, Ann sitting alone, raised above the heads of the dancing natives.

"What comes next will make you even sicker," the Eel-man went on.

"You fiend!" screeched Dick, struggling against the hands that held him in an effort to reach his tormentor.

The attempt was futile and he soon subsided.

The next will be a very pretty spectacle," continued the Eel-man. "The people have come from miles around to see it. You, too, will enjoy the ceremony."

Dick kept his mouth shut with an effort, realizing how futile it was to say anything when he was powerless to act. "You will see the beautiful white lady offered as a sacrifice to the Sacred Snake," continued the Eel-man.

"Good God, man, you don't really mean you are going to do that?" cried Dick involuntarily.

"The people would be greatly displeased if I did not furnish them with a great spectacle each year."

Dick's blood ran cold at the thought. He looked up helplessly at Ann, who lay exhausted on the platform without

moving. He cursed his fate at being unable to do anything. Through dry lips he asked:

"How long before this happens?"

"Not until evening."

"Thank God for that!" cried Dick.

"Meantime the people must have their feast."

"What are we to do until evening?" asked Dick, in the hope of getting some news which might suggest to him a plan of escape.

"You are to remain in the temple, to get acquainted with her great goodness, the Sacred Snake."

"Alone?" asked Dick hopefully.

"You would be just as safe alone," said the Eel-man, "but two guards are always in attendance on the Sacred Snake. This temple—he swept his arm toward the dome of the hall—"is made of stone, it is solid in every way, not a chink in it big enough for the Sacred Snake to crawl through. You will never leave it alive."

At the last words Dick grew taut and pale.

"You mean you are going to carry out your program?" he asked.

"Yes. You will have till sundown to say your prayers and make peace with your own God and then you will stand by alone, except for the attendants, and watch the Sacred Snake crush your sweetheart, bone by bone, in her beautiful—"

"Stop!" screamed Dick, tortured beyond endurance by the terrible picture conjured up by the Eel-man.

"Oh, it will be a very pretty spectacle."

"But can't I be offered up as a sacrifice, too?" asked Dick after a moment's thought.

"No. It is against the rules. The Sacred Snake must have only virgins, and only one a year."

"And I am to be outside the cage?" cried Dick.

Yes. But it will be dark; you will not see much. There will be only a few temple lights burning. The worshipers go for the night to take the divine drug on a hilltop far from here while the woman is being consumed; but don't worry, the Sacred Snake moves slowly and your sweetheart will not be attacked until the middle of the night."

"Good heavens, man!" cried Dick. "You are a fiend incarnate."

The Eel-man only laughed in his face and remarked: "Now I must leave you for the feast. I will not return until evening. Meantime food will be brought to you and you will be alone with your sweetheart."

"Food!" cried Dick. "Do you think we could eat?"

"The Sacred Snake likes well-fed sacrifices."

"Ugh! You devil!" Dick ground his teeth, lashed with rage because of his impotence to kill the snake worshiper.

The Eel-man waved his hand in good-by to Dick and led the procession out of the temple.

Within five minutes the great marble door swung shut and one of the guards in the temple locked it securely. Dick watched the working of the locks and took note of the keys used.

Rushing to Ann, he helped her from the platform and they sat behind it, concealed from the other attendant who was sitting at the door to the Sacred Snake's cage.

"Courage, dear," Dick whispered to Ann.

"Oh, I feel so terrible. I wish they would kill me and get it over with," moaned Ann, clinging pitifully to Dick. "I seemed to have lost all my nerve. It is too terrible to think of; all those dancing savages, the Eel-man and that loathsome—"

"Don't think of that, dear," whispered Dick tensely. "You will be tried further. You have a great deal to go through, but I will kill you and then myself before I will let that—"

"Oh, Dick!" cried Ann, throwing herself upon him, sobbing hysterically.

Maddened by his helplessness and Ann's appeal, Dick held her close, whispering in her ear:

"Something will happen. Something is bound to happen. If nothing comes along to help us, I will do something myself; I will think of something to do."

"But it's so hopeless. We could never get out of here in a lifetime," sobbed Ann.

"We won't have a lifetime to do it in."

"Oh, it's too awful to think of, Dick."

"Anyway, if the worst comes to the worst, we will die together, dear. But let's try to plan some way out."

"There is no way, there is no way!" moaned Ann.

"I believe there is," said Dick, gritting his teeth purposefully and glaring at the two guards who stood between him

and freedom. They were heavily armed, while he had only his jack-knife—and the phosphorus. That last thought warmed him a little as he remembered what the Eel-man had said about the natives' superstitious fear of him when he glowed with smoking phosphorus. There was still a chance.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE FURIOUS FIGHT

"TRY to sleep a little. You are utterly worn out," Dick suggested to Ann after they had sat in silence for some time.

"Oh, I can't sleep, Dick," she sighed.

"But you need it. If you got some sleep you might be rested enough to think of some way out, or help get away if I thought of something."



The police officer knocked four times and, revolver in hand, stood ready.

"Yes, yes, dear. I'll do my best," she pillowed her head on his shoulder and, after much restless tossing, both fell into a fitful doze, for they were exhausted.

They did not awaken until the din of the returning worshippers disturbed them.

Dick opened his eyes first and heard the sound of the religious music and the shouts of the revelers who had feasted their fill and were now coming to witness the last deed in their terrible ritual.

"Ann," he whispered, seeing several platters of fruit beside them, brought in while they were asleep, "try to eat something. It will give you strength, and you will probably need it."

"Yes, dear," she answered submissively, and both managed to eat quite a substantial quantity of fruit and tropical sweetmeats before the great marble doors swung open and the Eel-man appeared.

He walked quickly to them and said impatiently:

"Come! Come! You must prepare for the ceremony."

Housing them to their feet and surrounding them with a circle of guards, he ordered one of his priests to tie about Ann's arm a white ribbon, the symbol of sacrifice to the Sacred Snake. Then he had Ann raised again to the platform and Dick held beneath it while he blew on a gaily-bedecked goat's horn, and called the worshippers to the orgy.

They burst through the door in great disarray, their eyes dancing with fiendish lights.

The Eel-man mounted the platform, and while a circle of musicians about it played a weird, shivery air, he made various incantations before Ann. He turned toward the Sacred Snake at intervals and bowed low, throwing incense from a brazier. The Sacred Snake lay in a lethargy in its jasper tree, seeming to take but a mild interest in the proceedings in her honor.

At the end of the short ceremony Ann was lifted from the platform and, before Dick realized what was going on, she was rushed through the shouting and dancing crowd to the gate of the cage.

When Dick did realize the meaning of these sudden moves he tore from his guards with the strength of a maniac and leaped through the throng of devotees, knocking them right and left.

"Ann! Ann!" he shouted. "I'm coming."

The Eel-man leaped from his platform among his followers and pursued Dick, who reached the gate of the cage just as it was being opened and Ann pushed through.

Striking right and left, with superhuman energy, Dick gained the door and had almost grasped Ann when the blow of a knotted wooden club struck him on the side of the head and knocked him senseless.

Kicking Dick's body to one side, the voodoo worshippers finished their devilish work, and Ann dropped limp and fainting inside the Sacred Serpent's cage while the great wire gate was swung shut and securely locked upon her.

Ann crumpled down in a faint as the snake worshippers danced around the cage with exultant shouts to the Sacred Snake. It gave several appraising glances at its prey, and wriggled slowly down the tree.

At a blast from the Eel-man's horn the worshippers rushed from the hall, leaving Ann to her fate, while they continued the ceremony by taking some kind of drug on the distant hill-top.

As the temple cleared of all but the two guards, the Eel-man stood beside the gate to the cage, Dick lying insensible at his feet and Ann unconscious just inside.

"The play is over. Ring down the curtain," he cried exultingly in English. "Sacred Snake, enjoy yourself. I have worked hard for this sacrifice, and the diamond on your brow." He turned and threw a reverent kiss to the huge boa-constrictor, who had stopped in a notch half-way down the tree, and was watching its prey.

"In the middle of the night when, in your slow-moving way, you have crushed every bone in this virgin body and are about to devour the flesh," continued the Eel-man, "think of your faithful servant, who gives you the greatest gifts of sacrifice known to voodooism."

With a brief injunction to the guards to be watchful, the Eel-man hurried out to join his people and lead the procession to the sacred hilltop.

It was some time before either Ann or Dick regained consciousness. The temple was quiet, except for the soaly movements of the serpent, gliding slowly down the stone tree to inspect its prey and begin the slow method of torture.

One guard sat at each side of the cage door. The great marble entrance had been safely locked, the dim temple lights were burning, and the quiet of a tomb reigned.

Suddenly Dick stirred and put his hand to his aching head. He felt blood, warm blood, which brought him to consciousness. Dizzy and weak, he sat up, taking in the surroundings in a slow stare. Ann lay unconscious just four feet from him, but separated by the heavy copper wires of the cage. The two attendants sat one on each side, eyeing him closely. Then his eyes engaged the shining eyes of the serpent, now near the base of the tree, swinging its head back and forth in slow movements, Ann's diamond shining in the temple lights.

A weakness at the pit of his stomach nearly caused him to lose consciousness again, but he summoned all the stamina he had left, and continued his inspection of the empty temple.

The serpent was moving slowly toward Ann. There was not a moment to lose. He was too weak to attack the guards. Common sense told him that would be hopeless, as they sat with rifles across their knees, guarding the gate to the sacred cage.

There was only one thing to do; he had half planned it during the terrible day. He was glad Ann was unconscious, and hoped she would remain so, as he could work better without worrying about her. But he must work quickly, as the serpent was slowly approaching her.

Putting his hands to his head and acting as though he was very sick, Dick rose to his feet, watching to see if the guards would attempt to stop him. They watched him, but made no sign of interference. He staggered across the floor, walking as though in a trance and aiming to get as far away from the guards as possible, out of their sight perhaps.

They evidently felt secure in their positions and did not disturb him, knowing that he could not escape and thinking that he was walking about the temple in a daze. Besides, the fascination of seeing the Sacred Serpent stalk its prey was upon them, and they paid little heed to the stunned prisoner, groping about for a dark corner of the temple.

At last Dick found just the sort of seclusion he had searched for and, without an instant's waste of time he took out the precious lump of phosphorus and, slowly removing most of his clothes, quickly smeared his body with the glowing, smoking stuff, being careful to keep his shining body hidden behind a huge idol which shut off the sentinels' view of him.

Having completely covered himself with the phosphorus and feeling confident that he glowed like a ball of fire, Dick opened his knife, gripped the handle firmly between his teeth and, summoning every ounce of strength he had left, leaped from his hiding-place and, with a yell—the best imitation of the Eel-man's he could give—leaped across the space between him and the guards, jumping high and keeping his yell resounding through the temple. Before the guards could remove their frightened eyes from him, Dick was upon them and had snatched the rifle from the hands of one of the awe-struck guards, overcome with superstitious fear at the sight of the lighted apparition in the holy temple where the Eel-man had taught them to expect miracles.

Dick's ruse had worked. Dexterously he slammed the butt of his rifle against the head of one of the dazed guards and sent him toppling over, stunned. The other guard scrambled to his feet and made an effort to escape, but Dick shot him through the leg, bringing him down, helpless.

A loud hiss behind him made Dick turn instantly to the Sacred Snake's cage. The snake, roused from her lethargy by the sudden yelling and commotion, had glided swiftly across the cage, spitting angrily, for the moment forgetting Ann's inert body at its mercy.

Dick knew it was but a question of seconds before the snake would turn and vent its rage on Ann. If she would only remain still and not attract the attention of the serpent

there was some hope; but as he paused a moment Ann raised herself on her arm and screamed, "Dick!"

The serpent instantly turned its head and fixed its gaze on her, darting out its horrid tongue not two feet from her face and looking at her with fixed fascination.

Turning over one of the watchmen, Dick snatched the keys to the cage from his belt and in five seconds had opened the gate and leaped at the snake with clubbed rifle, just as the hideous reptile was drawing itself together in coils to envelop and squeeze the life out of Ann.

Without ceremony, Dick pushed Ann through the gateway with his feet and, feeling that she was safe for the time being, gave his sole attention to the snake.

CHAPTER TWENTY

A SURPRISE

THE tail of the snake lashed about; it darted its huge head at Dick, finally knocking the gun from his hand and managing to throw one coil of its crushing body about him.

Dick slashed vigorously at the reptile, trying frantically to loosen the hold which was beginning to suffocate him already.

The Sacred Snake quivered and writhed in a ferocious ferment, struggling to throw another coil about the body of its victim, but Dick made rapid headway with his knife and from his first frantic efforts at jabbing the snake wherever he could he began to cut at the same place in a tense race for life.

He cut and hacked at the terrible body which coiled around him like a steel spring, gripping him tighter every moment, crushing his body and making each knife thrust weaker.

At last, with a superhuman effort, knowing that the race between the hug of the serpent and his cutting through the coiling spring was going against him, Dick shot the point of his knife into the bones of the reptile's vertebra and pressed down with all his remaining strength.

The snake writhed and lashed about in agony; Dick felt a momentary loosening of the coil. Gasping for breath, he pressed harder on the knife and succeeded in separating the vertebra.

With one convulsive slump the snake let go its hold and lay squirming, its head down, a nerveless, twitching, defeated mass.

Loosening himself from the heavy body of the reptile, Dick snatched the diamond from its head, put it in his mouth for safekeeping, sprang through the door, closed the gate, locked it, standing for a moment to make sure that the reptile was at last in its death throes.

He heard a low, joyful cry behind him and for the first time in some minutes was conscious of the presence of Ann.

"Oh," she cried, rising weakly to her feet, "it was wonderful."

"Quiet," Dick cautioned her, having no thought but escape. "We are only making a fair start toward escape. Pull off that watchman's shirt and tear it into strips; I must tie them both up so they can't pursue when they finally revive."

"Dick! You look so frightful," cried Ann. "I can hardly realize it is you. No wonder the watchmen were scared. But how did you do it. How did you get the keys to the cage?"

"Another time, dear! There isn't a second to spare," answered Dick, fumbling in the pockets of one of the watchmen for the keys to the great front door, which he had already had time to study.

Having found the keys, he took the shirt strips Ann handed him and quickly bound the unconscious watchmen, not troubling to note whether they were coming to consciousness or not.

"There! Now you will need the strength I told you to try and keep to-day," said Dick, taking Ann gently by the arm and leading her toward the door. "We are going to make good our escape. Here! Put this ring on!" He pressed the recovered ring into her hand.

"I never thought I would get my engagement-ring like this," cried Ann, bewildered, looking at Dick's glowing phosphorescent body. "Are you going out like this?"

"Yes, dear," he said firmly. "It's our only chance. I have one of the watchmen's guns and some ammunition, but I also want the protection of this phosphorus if we meet any superstitious natives. You carry my clothes."

Dick was already unlocking the great door. As he started to pull it open Ann grasped his arm.

"Listen!" she cried.

"What is it?"

Ann glanced sharply back at the cage of the snake, which was still lashing about feebly.

"Hear those footsteps!" she cried, turning again to press her ear against the crack in the door.

"Yes."

"They are running. They are coming here. Up the steps."

"Throw your weight against the door!" cried Dick, trying to slam the door shut, so he could work the keys. "We must lock it!"

A loud scuffle of footsteps came to their ears, the door suddenly quivered with the shock of an impact from the outside.

"Hold it!" shouted Dick, feverishly working at the lock.

"I-I can't!" Ann called weakly.

Dick, with superhuman effort, managed to make the lock meet within a fraction of an inch, but his waning strength could not accomplish any more miracles. Another thud on the door sent it quivering open and Dick and Ann sought a moment's protection behind it.

A mass of indistinct forms flowed into the building.

There were shouts of "Where are they?" "I don't see anybody!"

Suddenly Dick's phosphorescent glow was made out by the attacking party. A crowd rushed upon him, shouting, "There he is!" "Get him!" "That's the Eel-man!"

The excitement and hubbub was too much for Dick's confused brain, but Ann seemed to see what it was all about, and as they dragged Dick beneath one of the temple lights she made sure of her guess and burst into hysterical tears as she recognized the uniforms of the United States Marines.

"Dick! Dick!" cried Ann above the noise. "We are saved. They're our own sailor boys. United States Marines."

Dick stood aghast as the light showed him the uniforms of his captors. He could not believe his eyes; after all he had gone through it seemed too good to be true that he was really in the protection of United States Marines, the greatest fighting men in the world.

An officer stepped beside Ann and looked into her face.

"Are you Miss Weyman?" he asked.

"I am."

"And is that wild man Dick Stevens?"

"He is."

"What's he doing in that make-up?" queried the officer.

"It's too long a story to tell now."

"Boys, boys," cried the officer, pushing through the crowd of marines holding Dick and still thinking from the struggle he had put up in the dark by the door that he was the Eel-man. "There's some mistake. This is Dick Stevens, and back there is Ann Weyman, the people we were sent after."

They fell back from Dick in astonishment and it was several minutes before everything was explained to everybody else's satisfaction and Dick was washed clean of his phosphorus and dressed again in his clothes.

Without waste of time the officer questioned them about the religious fanatics and where they might now be found.

"They're celebrating on a distant hilltop, taking some kind of drug. They'll be back here by morning. Everybody went but the two watchmen. And I've kept them too busy for them to have given out any news of what has happened," said Dick.

"Then instead of following them you think the best thing we can do is hold the temple till they come back in the morning to see how the Sacred Snake enjoyed Miss Weyman?"

"Exactly. You can round them up in a bunch then," said Dick.

"That's what we've wanted to do for years, ever since we first heard of this mysterious religious city somewhere in Hayti."

"But how did you guess we might be hers?" asked Ann.

"We got the clue from the Eel-man, and as soon as the

captain of the *Searcher* and Mrs. Huntley reported your disappearance to us we followed the Eel-man to his religious devotions, thinking our chances were good in finding you. We lost the scent a couple of times and almost arrived too late as it was, but the Eel-man is a tough customer."

"We know that," smiled Ann.

"And now I think this young lady ought to be taken back to the *Searcher* as soon as possible," suggested Dick. "She's had her share of excitement in the last few days."

"How about you?" put in Ann.

"Oh, I want to stay and see the fun in the morning," said Dick.

"No, sir," said Ann positively. "I won't go back to the boat unless you do. That's settled."

"All right," smiled Dick. "I guess I need a good sleep, too."

"The *Searcher* followed us and is lying off the shore right near our boat," said the officer. "We hit a straight trail from the shore to the town. We have a fleet of motorcycles along and I guess we can spare two of them to take you people back."

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

CONCLUSION

DICK and Ann, seated behind two marines on service motorcycles, made a quick trip to the shore and were rowed to the *Searcher* in a waiting boat. There they found the captain, Mrs. Huntley, Jean, Tony and several of the common sailors waiting up for news of them.

Mrs. Huntley, at sight of her charge, grew hysterical and the captain silently wrung Dick's hand.

"Well, you certainly look as though you have had a time of it," he remarked to Dick.

"Now that it's all over I don't regret a bit of it," said Dick.

"But I'll bet you don't want to do it over again," the captain suggested, with a smile.

"Not for a million dollars."

"Or Miss Weyman's diamond?"

"By the way, we got that back," said Dick. He turned to Ann, who was trying to release herself from Mrs. Huntley's motherly arms. "Show them your engagement-ring, dear."

Ann shyly extended her third finger, from which glistened the famous diamond her Uncle Harry had given her, the ring that had caused all the excitement and trouble.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mrs. Huntley. "You don't mean to say you managed to get that back, too?"

"We certainly did," said Dick, proudly.

"But what do you mean by engagement-ring?" put in Jean Holland, with true feminine curiosity.

"Just that," said Dick, more proudly.

"Yes," agreed Ann. "I told Dick we would be engaged when he got the diamond back. But we were engaged long before that."

"You don't mean that during all your adventures you had time to make love and really get engaged?" cried Mrs. Huntley.

"We had quite a little time to ourselves, didn't we dear," Ann smiled up into Dick's eyes.

"Yes, alone with the Sacred Snake, and little odd moments like that," replied Dick.

"Oh, please don't mention that terrible thing," Ann shuddered with the thought.

"I never will again," said Dick.

"You children must go right to bed. You look like ghosts," said Mrs. Huntley solicitously. "And I'll give you one little piece of information before you retire."

"What's that?" asked Ann.

"When you wake up you'll be well on your way to New York. I've had enough of this foolishness. It really got too serious toward the finish," said Mrs. Huntley.

"It certainly did," said Dick, looking at Ann. "Have you had enough excitement, dear?"

"Yes. Enough to last a lifetime. I'll be glad to settle down with you in a comfortable Riverside Drive apartment."

"And go to moving pictures for thrills," smiled Dick.

"Yes. That would be quite a relief after this."

Within a few minutes the exhausted little party retired, all but the captain, who was ordered to make full speed ahead for New York, after expressing the *Searcher's* thanks to the United States Marines for their invaluable services, without which the ultimate fate of Ann and Dick would have been problematical.

It was nearly noon next day before the little *Searcher* party, refreshed, appeared for breakfast.

Tony had spread a banquet in the dining-saloon, which he called an "engagement breakfast."

"How did you know about it, Tony?" asked Ann, as she seated herself happily at the head of the table and smiled good morning to Dick, neither of them looking much the worse for wear.

"I kind of guessed it for a long time," grinned Tony. "Besides, there's a little flying-fish down here that whispers things in my ear."

"That must be a funny flying-fish," remarked Dick. "I believe you just imagine it. Like you imagined the Eel-man was some kind of a sea monster."

"I know he ain't now," smiled Tony, looking through the port-hole. "Do you guess where we are right now?"

"No. Only we're headed for home," said Ann.

"We're passin' through the Eel-man's place," said Tony. "See, there's the cave you found him in."

The little party rose from the table and looked at the black grotto looming up ahead of them.

"You aren't afraid of him this time, are you, Tony?" remarked Ann.

"No. Mr. Stevens done settled that ghost for all time to come."

Dick Stevens smiled at the chef and asked him to fill four glasses with wine. When he had handed the glasses around Dick, with his arm about Ann, proposed the toast: "Here's to the Eel-man with his phosphorescent hair. Here's to the Eel-man who swims like a streak of greased lightning, worships the Sacred Snake, steals rings and slaps faces with his long, limber hands"—he hugged Ann close to him and pressed his glass to her rosy lips—"and here's to the Eel-man who helped me win the greatest, pluckiest girl in the world."



A TALE OF A PRIVATE LETTER-BOX

BY CLEVELAND MOFFETT.

THERE had been a scene that morning in the Barkley household—a scene of jealousy, in the course of which big-hearted, well-meaning Tom had said unkind and sarcastic things to Dolly, his fascinating little wife—she of the dimples and demure face. Dolly, with flashing eyes and a defiant “Very well, sir!” had left the room, and Tom sat there gloomily thinking.

Presently Dolly appeared in a jaunty street gown, her plump, petite figure shown off to perfection. If she had been crying, she did not show it, and her eyes, with their long, black lashes, shone lustrous through the carefully adjusted veil. Dolly was a beauty. She was a woman possessed of ingenuity and brains.

“I am going out, dear,” she said lightly, as if nothing had happened.

Tom vouchsafed no reply, except a grunt. Then he watched Dolly trip away down the avenue, her charms of person all the more apparent under the softening light of a crimson parasol. It was a lovely summer morning, and New York was at its best.

“I wonder where she is going?” Tom muttered. Then he felt a pang of jealousy again, and doubt came into his mind.

“What if she was—I believe she is—by George, I’ll find out!” He caught up his hat and cane and left the house.

In the two years since they had been married, Mr. Barkley, manlike, had doubted his wife several times, but never until now had he conde-

sended to play the detective and follow her. The sensations of a husband following his wife are distinctly unpleasant. In the first place, he feels himself ridiculous. He is not accustomed to following people, and soon realizes that it is no easy matter. If he ventures too near he may be discovered; if he stays too far behind, he may lose her. At each turn he hurries on, fearful lest she disappear into some shop, and yet conscious of his hopeless disadvantage should she suddenly turn back.

Then the street cars, subways and the elevated railway! It seems to him that his wife takes a malicious pleasure in riding even the shortest distances, as if she understood the difficulty a man has in concealing himself on the platform or running along the sidewalk.

Worst of all the shops! Tom kept on bravely until Mrs. Barkley began buying things, or looking at things she did not propose to buy. If there is one thing which is more embarrassing than another for a jealous husband, it is to maneuver about on such a mission in one of those

human beehives on Sixth avenue, trying to appear at ease in the eyes of the shop girls and the floor-walkers, not daring to move very far from the spot where the suspected fair one is tossing over laces and stuffs with the utmost deliberation, dodging with as much dignity as possible behind pillars and piles of goods as his wife changes her position, and altogether feeling guilty and sick at heart.

This part of Tom’s penance lasted for about two hours, when Mrs. B—— (how could she be so heartless as to have an appetite!) realized that lunch-time had come, and established herself comfortably in the ladies’ restaurant, while her unfortunate husband waited outside until she had



*Taking the woman unawares,
he snatched the letter
from her hands.*

finished her meal, and it seemed ages to him. Even in writing her order, Dolly acted, it struck him, with the deliberation of a diplomat drafting a treaty.

"This is bad business," said Tom to himself. "I wish I had never started. I wonder where she is going now?"

With a pleased expression and looking as fresh and lovely as the day itself, Mrs. Dolly Barkley continued her promenade. Now she left the shopping district and, walking more quickly, turned to the left, into Thirty-eighth street, and continued her way with an air of knowing the neighborhood. Suddenly as she neared Seventh avenue she stopped at a dingy little shop in the basement of a shabby-looking building, tripped down some steps and disappeared.

"H'm!" said Tom to himself. Posting himself on the opposite side of the street, he scanned the premises, and discovered that it was an umbrella shop. Looking more closely, he saw in smaller letters an announcement: "Private letter-boxes here."

"Ah, that's what she's after! I've caught her at last!"

As the certainty of his wife's deceit was forced upon him, the poor fellow felt his anger giving way to a crushing grief. Now that he had found out what he wanted to know, he was sorry to know it, and almost afraid to push his investigations further. He was tempted to turn away then and there and forget the whole incident. But again his stubbornness held him to his task, and he persisted doggedly. Presently Dolly left the shop and walked away slowly, reading a letter.

"I must have that letter," said Tom to himself, hurrying after. "There is no use waiting any longer; I may as well have this thing out with her now."

Crossing the street and approaching her quickly, he said:

"What are you doing here?"

There was anguish in his tone and his face was white, but the woman answered him with perfect self-possession:

"Why, I am doing some shopping. What are you doing?"

"Are you accustomed to do your shopping in Seventh avenue basements?"

"When I have a parasol that needs repairing, I go to a man who can do it properly."

"That's a lie! You did not go into that basement to have your parasol fixed; you went there to get a letter. I saw it in your hands. You have tried to hide it in your corsage, but the end is sticking out. Give it to me."

There was a brutality in the command which would have frightened most women. This woman remained calm.

"I would have you understand, sir, that my private correspondence belongs to me and not to you. If I have a letter here, it is my letter, and I shall keep it."

"Unless you give me that letter of your own accord, I shall take it from you by force. Do you wish to have a scene here in the street?"

The woman tapped her gloved hand nervously on the parcel she was carrying. For a few moments they walked on side by side without speaking.

"Why do you insist on reading a letter I don't want you to read? Remember a woman never forgives a man for such a blunder."

"Why do you call it a blunder? My doubts will at least be set at rest."

"What a simple-minded fellow you are, to be sure. You are ignorant of the fundamental principles of dealing with a woman. Let me give you a bit of advice, which may serve you in the future: never let a woman know you doubt her until you hold in your hands absolute proof of her guilt. Then play your trump card once for all and she will respect you. To act as you are doing now merely puts her on her guard. You have either gone too far or not far enough, and your present position, my dear, is simply ridiculous."

"Ridiculous or not, I propose to see that letter. How do I know that it does not contain positive evidence of your guilt?" Then after a pause he added: "Come, darling, if there is no harm in the letter show it to me and I swear I will never suspect you again."

His tone was tender now, but she struck back relentlessly:

"How like a silly man that is! Why, even if this letter is innocent, what does that prove? How do you know that I did not receive one of another kind yesterday, or last week? How can you be sure what I will do to-morrow, or in the days to come, that is, unless you intend devoting yourself in the future to following your wife?"

Stung by his wife's sarcasm, the husband had recourse to brutal strength.

"I've had enough of this nonsense—there!" Taking the woman unawares, he snatched the letter from her hands.

"Give me back that letter"; and then changing her tone to one of almost supplication: "Please give me back the letter, Tom."

Her pleading look as she said these words, a look which the man took as an admission of guilt, was like a knife stab. Now that he had the letter in his hands, he was afraid to read it. He trembled at the thought of knowing absolutely the thing he had suspected. He loved the woman.

"If I give it back to you, will you show it to me of your own accord?"

"Yes, I will, when we get home to-night, but not here in the street. Can't you trust me until then?"

All his doubts once more possessed him. She was trying to gain time and prevent him by a subterfuge from seeing the letter.

"A woman who by her own admission carries on a secret correspondence and receives letters unknown to her husband in a Seventh avenue base-

ment, does not deserve to be trusted. No, I shall read the letter myself."

The woman's agitation was now apparent. Tears, whether of rage or sorrow, shone in her eyes and her pretty mouth twitched nervously.

"Look here, Tom, suppose I admit what you think, will you give me back the letter?"

"Do you mean to admit that you have been—that you have had— Oh, my heavens, I can't believe it."

"Why don't you read the letter, Tom?" she said softly.

With white lips he drew the folded sheet from the envelope and read the letter which, to his great amazement, was addressed to himself, in his wife's handwriting:

"MY DEAR, SILLY OLD DARLING:

"You had not been following me five minutes when I discovered you and determined to teach you a lesson. I doubt if you will ever make a good detective, Tom. But even if you should, let me tell you that the husband who follows his wife is in a bad business. Do you know why? Because either she is true to him or she is not, and if she is, there is nothing so apt to make her do wrong as to be suspected and shadowed by the man she loves. On the other hand, if she is not true to him, believe me, my dear boy, there is no detective system perfect enough and clever enough to prevent her from carrying out her purpose. So you see, as I have demonstrated in quite a logical way for a woman, it is either an unnecessary precaution or a hopeless one for a husband to follow his wife. When you have read these lines and meditated upon them, I want you to take your little wife home and promise never to be such a goose again. Then she will forgive you and you will be able to collect a hundred warm kisses from

"Your faithful

"DOLLY.

"P. S. Here is a proof for you of how easy it is for a woman to outwit a man. I am writing this letter under your very nose; poor dear, how forlorn you look over

there, and you are firmly convinced I am writing my order for lunch. You see, if I was the sort of woman you suspect, I might be sending a warning to the very person with whom you imagine I have a rendezvous."

"Do you mean to say," gasped Tom, "do you mean to say—" In the confusion of his ideas he could go no further, but turning to Dolly with the true lover light in his eyes, would have caught her in his arms then and there had she not called him to order.

"No scene in the street, sir," she said, with pretended dignity. "Besides it is not fitting for a jealous husband to be so affectionate."

Vows of eternal confidence followed from the man, who was as humble now as he had been fierce.

"You have taught me a good lesson, little one, which will last the rest of my days. And you did it like an artist. By Jove, that was clever enough for a novel!"

Late that night, after a period of delightful reconciliation, including a dinner at Delmonico's, a theater and a cozy supper, Tom sat in the library tarrying a few moments with his rose-colored thoughts, while Dolly was preparing to retire. There are no moments in a husband's life pleasanter than these, when kisses have stilled the voice of jealousy, and he admits complacently he has made a fool of himself. Tom thought what a brute he had been, how unworthy of such a sweet little wife. It seemed as if he had never loved her so intensely.

Suddenly a startled look came into his eyes, and he knit his brows in puzzled meditation. Then he said aloud:

"I wonder how Dolly happened to know the address of that queer letter-box place, anyhow?"

ANOTHER MYSTERY SOLVED

It is an unusual sight to see a balance spring made of copper, but such a spring has been made by Samuel R. Dawson of New York. Mr. Dawson has carried for several weeks a watch in which has been placed a hardened copper balance spring and the time-piece has so far performed with remarkable accuracy.

The process of hardening copper, as is well known, was invented in the early ages, and Mr. Dawson claims to have rediscovered this process. He has made castings which are highly valuable owing to their resisting power. For use on frictional parts of machinery the new discovery is claimed to be superior to steel in wearing qualities.

The inventor, who is over seventy years of age, and possessed of unusual mental and physical vitality for his years, has recently applied his discovery to phonographic needles, which, it is claimed, are turned out at small expense, and moreover the inventor says they will last longer than those of steel. By means of the new dis-

covery it is claimed the clearness of the human voice is more satisfactorily reproduced.

"Hardened copper," said Mr. Dawson, "is not pure copper tempered, as it is impossible to temper copper as one tempers steel. Prehistoric men did not do it, nor is it possible to effect it by any modern process. Just the same, my copper alloy, which is physically identical with the best ancient brass, will take a keen edge and will hold it under some conditions where steel cannot do so. While composed of copper and tin, still it has in it other elements which it has been so far impossible for the assayist to discover.

"What is probably just as strange, the alloy can be remelted any number of times without parting with any of its distinctive characteristics. In other words, once hardened copper it is always such. This explains why the ancients were said to make over the metal again and again and still have either the implements of industry or the sharp-edged weapons that they required."

GHOST OF THE COSMOPOLITAN

BY WM. H. SANFORD

ONE morning the head of our firm remarked: "Mr. Wolcott" (my name, by the way, is James Wolcott), "I want you to go down to Parkville and take those depositions in the Leonard case. You can catch the night express back, or you can stay until morning."

In the course of a year many people travel to Parkville, but when they arrive there they are so disagreeably impressed by the place that they rarely ever stay. I remembered in a vague sort of way that Parkville had come into notoriety for a day or two a few years ago through reason of a hotel fire, in which at least one man had perished so successfully as to justify the newspapers to use the word "holocaust" in reference to the fire. However, that need not alarm me, as I intended to return on the night express. I like to travel at night. There is such comforting, ghost-dispelling sound in the snores of my fellow passengers.

But fate was against me. My business, indeed, was quickly and easily despatched, and at 9 o'clock I was at the station, only to learn that a serious washout was reported up the road, and that all trains had been abandoned for the night. There was no help for it, so back I went to the hotel, the only one in the town, which suggestively enough was called the "Phoenix." The landlord took a cheerful view of the situation, as was perhaps natural. He gave me the best drink at the bar, which was bad enough, and the best room in the house, which was not so bad. Then he settled himself down and kindly told me, with much local pride and satisfaction, the harrowing details of the holocaust before mentioned.

"And after the 'Cosmopolitan' had burned down," he went on, "the citizens clubbed together and helped the railroad put up this fine fireproof hotel, which they called the 'Phoenix,' after the bird that rose from its ashes. Pretty idea, and something new, don't you think?"

I admitted both beauty and novelty, and went up to my room. It was the ordinary country hotel bedroom, with a musty smell and a blind that creaked most dismally. I stopped the creaking by taking off the blind, and I mitigated the smell by throwing open both windows. I had impressed upon the landlord the importance of calling me at the first alarm of fire, and given a man I took to be the porter fifty cents to jog the landlord's memory if he overlooked this detail in a moment of excitement. Then I threw my clothes on the chair—I am careless about my personal attire—but my watch, pocket-book and revolver under the pillow, commended my soul to heaven with unseemly haste, and jumped into bed.

I am a light sleeper—another result of a nervous organization—and the circumstances under which I was sleeping, in a strange bed and in a

strange town, were not likely to deaden my slumbers. What awoke me I cannot say, but my first recollection is that of sitting up in the bed, holding the pistol in my hand and looking with considerable astonishment at the dim outline of a man apparently stowing away clothing in an ordinary gripsack. That the man was a burglar, and that he was taking unwarrantable liberties with my possessions, I had not the slightest doubt. My calmness under such trying conditions surprised me. I remember experiencing actual pleasure in cocking and aiming my revolver. The click of the lock alarmed him. He turned hastily, and said in a tone so thin that it seemed to come from a great distance:

"Here! Don't shoot, please!"

Enough light came in through the window from a lamp across the street to enable me to see the fellow more closely as he turned. He was appallingly thin, the merest shadow, in fact, with sunken cheeks and the glowing spectral eyes that Mary, my good nurse, had told me about thirty years before. I saw at once that he was no match for me physically, and it was plain that he was unarmed. So I said facetiously:

"You are not built for your calling, my friend. You would do better as a ghost."

And the reply came, mournfully and hollow:

"I am a ghost."

"Oh, I see."

"You'll excuse me," said the ghost, "if I go right on with my packing—but time flies."

"Pardon the bluntness of the question," I answered, feeling under the pillow for my watch and pocket-book, "but in the pressure of time are you packing up any of my things by mistake?"

"If you knew anything at all about spirits," said the ghost, carefully brushing and folding a coat, "you would know that they are strictly and invariably honest, and were never known to appropriate any article not belonging to them."

"Thanks," said I, considerably relieved by the assurance. "Now may I ask who you are, and to whom I am indebted for this unexpected pleasure?"

The ghost glided over to the washstand, gathered up a toothbrush and a cake of soap and tossed them into the bag. Then he answered:

"It doesn't matter who I am. I was William Wiggins, and all of me that was mortal was burned in the fire that destroyed the 'Cosmopolitan' Hotel on this spot three years ago this very night. You may have heard of me. I see that you have. Pardon me, if I keep right on with my work." And to my amazement he picked up a typewriter and threw it out of the window. I listened for the crash, and, hearing nothing, said:

"I have heard of you, William, in a desultory and unsatisfactory way, and should like to hear

more about you. Could you favor me with the particulars which escaped the newspapers? You'll find a cigarette, if you smoke, in that case on the bureau."

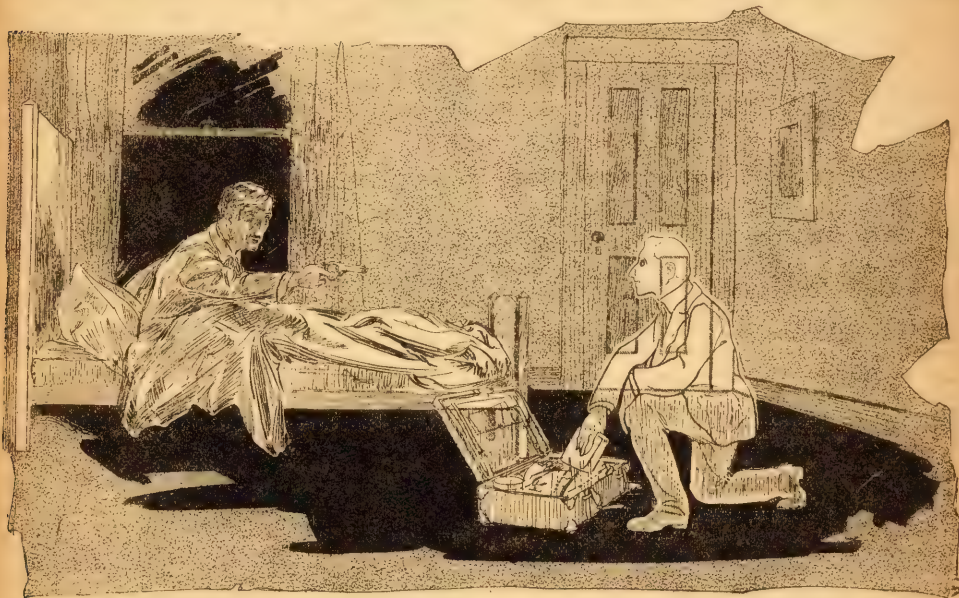
If it is possible for a ghost to turn paler than he is in his normal condition, that ghost certainly did. "Not for eternal rest," he said, hastily; "a cigarette was the cause of all my troubles. You are a sympathetic man. I recognize in you rare mediumistic qualities, and I'll tell you the story while I pack. Let me see. How do I get the right crease in these trousers? So; sometimes I forget, especially when I am excited. But to the story:

Just at this point I took out my watch and

think I might have escaped had I not thoughtlessly stopped to crease my trousers. That takes time, and the delay was fatal. Then I lost my head completely and began to throw things out of the window. Excuse me just a moment. I have reached the time when——"

Here the ghost pitched into the night a pair of shoes, a hat, a silver-handled cane, an umbrella and an ink-stand.

"Then," he continued, "I seized my valise and opened the door. The flames were already in the hall, and the smoke, pouring in, soon suffocated me. Two days later I attended the inquest in my spiritual form, and was much gratified by the remark of the coroner, who was sitting on a piece



I remember experiencing actual pleasure in aiming my revolver.

glanced at the time. It was twenty minutes of one.

"About four years ago," continued the ghost, "I was a guest at this hotel—or rather, the old hotel that stood on this site. My room corresponded closely to the one you are now occupying. In the apartment under me was a fellow who smoked cigarettes. It was not known on earth, though I know it now, that one of his cigarettes, carelessly thrown aside, started the disastrous blaze." The flames were under good headway before the alarm was raised. I was always a methodical man, and not realizing my danger, arose and began packing my clothes as cool and self-possessed as you have seen me to-night. I

of the tibia and a shin-bone, that I testified by my successful death to the inscrutable wisdom of Providence, who doeth all things well."

The story interested me deeply. "But how happens it," I asked, "that you return to the earth in this systematic way?"

"That is the disagreeable part of it. You see, after all my care in looking after my property, I entirely forgot my accident insurance policy, and left it on the bureau—you see it there. Of course it was burned up, and my family had nothing in the way of compensation for my death. For this outrageous carelessness I am compelled to return night after night to go over the harrowing scenes of my combustion?"

"But why don't you take the policy at once, now that it is in plain sight, and make off and end the matter, and go back to your tibia and shin-bone like a well-ordered corpse?"

"That's just it. I can't. Even with my spiritual discernment I must work out the stupid instincts of mortality. Don't you suppose a spirit, with my keen perceptions, recognizes the idiocy of pitching a typewriter out of the window? Do you think that a ghost, a thing purely of mind, unimpeded by matter, has not the sense to see the crying folly of stopping to crease trousers in a moment like this? It is not that I do not know better now. That is where my punishment comes in. I recognize the stupidity of mortality without the present power to change it. Every night I go just so far. The difference is that now I am conscious of the policy on the bureau, but must go on pitching out typewriter and creasing trousers, only to fall in a volume of flame and smoke on the threshold of yonder door as the clock strikes one."

"Bless my soul," said I, looking uneasily at my watch, "it lacks only nine minutes of one now. And, upon my word, I fancy I smell something burning. Tell me, my good William, honestly now, don't you think you ghosts could be in better business than coming back to earth and paralyzing people with fear by your unseemly actions?"

"What nonsense," returned the ghost, a little impatiently; "if you people on earth only knew us as we are, you would blush at your own fears. When I recall those absurd old tales about ghosts clanking heavy chains and dropping heavy weights it makes me positively ill where my stomach used to be. Look at me. I am a disembodied spirit. You can run your finger through any part of me. Now, how in heaven's name could I drop a weight or clank a heavy chain?"

"On the other hand," went on the ghost earnestly, "think what we must suffer. Take my own case, for example. Here I am, a spirit, I grant you. I have no body, it is true, but I have a mind, and a mind that, despite its growth, is subject more or less to the omniscient. I am, of course, exceedingly nervous and sensitive. Think of the state I must constantly be in. I know that at midnight I must go to a certain room. I cannot tell who is going to occupy that room, whether a commercial traveler, a gentleman like yourself, a soldier, an officer of the law, or a lady. A ghost is a gentleman *per se*, and his horror at finding himself in a lady's sleeping apartment is equaled only by his sincere grief at her unnecessary fears. Then again the commercial traveler or soldier may, as you have done, mistake me for a burglar and fire at me. To be sure, I am incorporeal, and the bullet cannot injure me, but at the same time it is an awful shock to my nervous system in addition to the annoyance at being interrupted at my work. Then think of the humiliation that I, an orderly spirit, should be taken for a common thief at night!"

"Really, William," said I, "your argument is

quite remarkable, but I am still puzzled. If you are incorporeal, and I perceive on closer inspection that you are, how can you talk? Where are your vocal cords, your trachea? How can you hear me? I examine you closely and note the absence of the usual auditory apparatus."

"You are wrong," replied the ghost; "you deceive yourself. I do not talk, I do not hear; I communicate with you and you with me by sympathetic impression. As I told you, you have rare mediumistic qualities, but your spirituality is so insufficiently developed that you cannot distinguish between spiritual communion and mortal interchange of thought. I beg your pardon. I am charmed to have met you"—here the ghost hastily picked up his gripsack—"but I have just time to get to that door. I don't wish to alarm you, but I am sure I smell something burning."

And so did I. There was no doubt of it. I saw the ghost look laughingly at the paper on the bureau and run swiftly across the room, and I'll swear that I saw him throw open the door and fall in the volume of smoke and flame that poured into the chamber. And all the time there was a tremendous singing in my ears, with the sound of the banging of doors and the shouting of men. And I heard a voice:

"Mr. Wolcott! Mr. Wolcott! Get up quick! Come down the back way! The house is on fire!"

I, James Walcott, am a lawyer and a man of unimpeachable veracity. It is true that I was the guest at the Phoenix Hotel, in Parkville, Oct. 10, the night it was burned to the ground. It is true that the porter called me at precisely one o'clock in the morning, and that I escaped in very scant attire, securing my watch, pocket-book and legal papers. It is also true that an accident policy, which I had taken out before leaving the city, was forgotten and burned in the flames. All these facts are heretofore unrevealed, as I have dreaded the notoriety attending the revelation of them by a sensational press. I disclose them now, not in the interest of spiritualists and the fanatical element of the promoters of physical research, but merely to dispel a very popular delusion concerning ghosts and to calm the fears of the superimaginative and the superstitious.

For myself, let me say if I have never seen a ghost since that night of adventure, it is not because I have not desired it. I have forgiven Mary. Peace be to her, for I revere her memory and thank her for her idle chatter. I have sought out country graveyards on tempestuous nights, and sat alone on marble slabs as the clock tolled the hour of twelve. Over my table, in my study, hangs a grinning skull, and many a time, between the hours of twelve and one, I have turned down the light, stood before the hideous emblem of mortality, and called on Israel or Barnaid, as the humor might suggest. But all in vain. No ghosts rise at my bidding. Alone I can accomplish nothing with the supernatural.

THE CROYDEN CASE

A Detective Serial

BY POLICE CAPTAIN HOWARD

CHAPTER I AT CROYDEN ABBEY

THE family name of Rupel was an old and honored one. It dated back to the time when William the Conqueror came over to England, and it had always been the pride of those bearing the name to carry it unblemished to the grave. The first Rupel in England was a man of no mean ability, although he gained his daily subsistence by providing for the comfort of the "soles" of those who might patronize him. He was a very haughty man, but he was never ashamed of his low birth, and rather prided himself on it, pointing with exultation to the manner in which he had carved his way to fortune. This old James Rupel was a hard task-master, and held the rod over the back of the poor apprentice and journeyman the same as if he had been the overseer of a plantation where slaves were employed. He was not loved, but feared by all whom he employed. He was very close in money matters; in fact, to a certain extent he was miserly. This close attention to the small-pence of his sales was the means of making him the great millionaire before he had reached the age of fifty. It was principally owing to his enormous wealth that he was knighted and given the title to the Croyden estates, situated in one of the finest portions of central England. This was one of the largest estates in England, and the owner was lucky in being the possessor of a fine old abbey, which had been built and occupied by the monks, but was confiscated to the State during the numerous changes of government through which the country had passed. When the shoemaker became the owner of the abbey, he had it remodeled, and furnished with the most elaborate kind of furniture. As generation after generation passed many of the heirs to the great Croyden Abbey became noted as politicians, statesmen and in other professions, which, if we were to mention them all, would be not only tiresome to the reader, but would have no bearing upon the story. It is with none of these that our story is to deal. We will skip over all further attempts at writing the genealogy of the good and pious ancestors of the Rupels and come down to modern times. If the last heir of this estate had been as honest as his ancestors, this story would never have been written, and the people of England would never have been startled by the great sensation which was the principal topic of newspaper discussion.

It was a bleak night in November. The snow was falling in blinding clouds and covering every object with "a cloth of purity." The wind howled and groaned as it played hide-and-seek in and

out of the many turns and corners of the old abbey at Croyden, and in its flight it caught up shutters and signs in the village and carried them along in its wild career, so that on the morrow many a poor shop-keeper found himself without any shutters and signless. To the superstitious this action of the elements was ascribed as the doings of the witches. It was such a night that few would desire to be without-doors, and those that were well housed and well fed were thankful that no mission called them out, and that they could enjoy the comforts of the warmth of the blazing grate-fire. Even the wretched man who had no fire and no comforts, but who had a shelter, no matter how poor it might be, was thankful on this night that his condition was no worse.

On this evening Sir Robert Rupel, the owner of the great Croyden Abbey, sat in a large arm-chair before a blazing grate-fire in his study. He was a man of about sixty years of age, of medium build, and his hair was as white as the snow that was covering every object without. His face wore a haggard and serious look as he scanned the pages of a book that was lying open before him. Something troubled him, one could see by the different changes of his countenance and the manner in which he acted when he suddenly started from his chair, flung the book aside and commenced to pace hurriedly up and down the apartment. In the excitement of the moment he had not noticed where the book had fallen, and as he paced up and down he kept stepping constantly upon the volume, tearing its leaves and scattering them about the room. So intent was he in thinking that he did not notice what his feet had done until the whole volume was torn to pieces. When he stopped in his walk and discovered what he had done, he stooped down and picked up the cover of the book, with the remaining leaves attached to its back, and muttered:

"So the very thing I was contemplating has been done unconsciously. I will burn the remnants of this cursed diary."

As he said this he commenced to pick up the scattered leaves and to throw them into the fire. When he had finished, and he had made sure that none had escaped his eyes, and that nothing now remained except the ashes, he said with a sigh:

"Thus perishes one evidence of my crime."

He sat down in his chair again and rested his head on his hand. As he did this the tempest, which had abated for some time, commenced to rage furiously, and the wind blew the falling hail in clouds against the window-panes. This storm annoyed the owner of the abbey with its noise, and he said:

"I wish the storm would cease. Never before have I been so harassed with the memories of the past, and this storm seems to bring them up more vividly before me. It was just such a night thirty years ago that that cursed thing happened. I wonder what time it is, and——"

Rap, rap, rap!

Further soliloquizing was cut short by three loud raps on the heavy oak door of the study.

Sir Robert Rupel turned in his chair, faced the door, and cried out in a harsh voice:

"Come in!"

As soon as it was opened he turned on his valet with a look of anger, and as the man stood waiting for some minutes, Sir Robert Rupel exclaimed:

"Why can't you speak? What do you want? Don't stand there waiting and gaping like an idiot. Shut that door, it's fearfully cold."

"A woman wants to see Sir Robert Rupel."

"What kind of a woman is she?"

"An old woman."

"Where did she say she came from?"

"She didn't state."

"Did she tell you her name?"

"No."

"You fool, why didn't you find out something about her?"

"Because she is dumb."

"How did you find out that?"

"Because she wrote what she wanted on a piece of paper, and refused to write anything more. She also wrote that she must see you to-night, and if you refused her an interview, to-morrow you would be sorry for it."

"Did the woman threaten me?" excitedly queried Sir Robert; his face wore a scowl, and, from his manner, it was evident that it would not be well for the person who trifled with him.

"She wrote just what I told you," answered the valet.

"Go back to the woman and tell her that I will not see her to-night, and that if she does not leave the house immediately I will have her locked up and severely punished in the morning."

The man left the room to carry his master's message, and soon returned with a note which he handed to Sir Robert.

As the nobleman opened the little piece of dirty white paper and gazed at the writing, he turned pale and started back with a look of terror on his face.

"Show the woman up," he hoarsely exclaimed, and after the man had left the room he took the note and threw it into the fire on top of the ashes of the diary. It caught on fire finally, and burned slowly on account of its being damp. It was still burning when the valet returned to the study and ushered the woman in. He then closed the door and left the dumb guest alone with his master.

Sir Robert Rupel was standing by the fireplace facing the door when the strange woman entered. For some time they stood silently looking at one

another. The woman had thrown off the shawl which had covered her head, and displayed a face that had once been beautiful, but was now wrinkled by care and suffering. Her hair was as white as the nobleman's who stood before her; her form was erect, and even now in her aged and broken-down condition there was something to admire about her. Her clothing was of the poorest kind, but for all that it was neat and clean.

"What's your business?" Sir Robert finally asked, in a voice that was full of emotion. "Has my steward turned you out-of-doors for non-payment of rent, and have you come here to beg me to let you stay?"

When the nobleman finished speaking the woman drew herself up to her full height, her eyes sparkled with indignation, and she exclaimed in a voice full of scorn:

"Sir Robert Rupel, you know well enough what I want."

"Oh, you can speak, can you? I thought that you were dumb?"

"For a purpose," quietly rejoined the woman.

"Pray, what may this purpose be? I'm sure I never met you before, my good woman."

"Robert Rupel," rejoined the woman, this time leaving the Sir off, "you pretend not to know me?"

"I'm sure I never met you before. Tell me what you have come here for to-night, and in such a storm."

"You say you never met me before, and that I am a stranger to you? Robert Rupel, you know you lie when you say this, and I would advise you to beware how you trifle with me. You say you don't know me? You stand there with your face as pale as a sheet, and tremble in your shoes; you can't look me straight in the eyes. Why is this? If I am a stranger to you, why should you act in such a frightened manner? You have nothing to fear from a strange woman, but you have from me. By denying that you have ever met me you hope to bluff me, but I would advise you to beware. If you don't listen I will publish your crimes broadcast throughout the country, and the world will then know what kind of a man the *respected* Sir Robert Rupel is."

"The world will believe your charges to be falsehoods, and consider them a blackmailing scheme."

"Not when I can produce proof to sustain those charges."

"I defy you!" thundered the nobleman.

"Then this very night I shall tell William what he is. He shall know what a scoundrel he has for a father. Robert Rupel, I go now to find your son."

The woman turned to leave the room; her hand was on the knob of the door, but before she could open it Sir Robert started from where he was standing, grasped her by the wrist, pulled her back into the center of the room, and exclaimed:

"Madge Babbington, are you crazy?"

"So you recognize me at last, do you?" cried the woman, as she pulled her hand from his grasp. Sir Robert hung his head, and did not answer the question for some time.

"Madge, don't do anything rash. What good would it do for you to tell William of your and my shame? He don't know you, and if you should tell him anything he would consider you a crazy woman."

"He thinks that he is your heir. Your wife thinks that he is the son of the woman you married before her. What if she should discover that this is not so? William will know of it, and his disgrace will be great."

"He will never know of it until my death."

"Then what will you do?"

"I will then leave a written confession, and will him a large sum of money, but the estates and the title must go to Clarence, the lawful heir to the Croyden property."

"Have you no idea of justice? William, my son, is your only lawful heir; if you had married me and not committed the crimes you did, this disgrace would never have happened. you deceived me; when our child was born you took him from me, and then when I was able to travel you had me carried to a foreign land, where I was confined in a convent for many long years. I only succeeded in escaping a few months ago. When I arrived in London, I learned that you had taken good care of the child—you had given him a good education; he had been successful after he had left college, and now to-day he is a leading member in the House of Commons, respected by the people, and bidding fair to occupy, in a short time, a great government position. Have you no sympathy in your cold heart, Robert Rupel? Your kindness to William will in the end prove a curse."

"Madge, Madge, don't upbraid me so. I did it all for the best," said the guilty man. "I loved you better than any woman I ever knew, and if you had had money I would have married you. I was fearfully in debt. My creditors threatened me. What was I to do? I could not marry you, so I married a woman who brought me money and saved me from disgrace."

"When you sent me abroad you might have sent the child also."

"No, I did not want to do that. I hope that I might be able to fix my papers in such a way that no one would ever know but what he was my lawful heir. Matters went on from year to year. I delayed doing anything, and the result is that now I have come to the conclusion that in my last days I will not attempt to blacken my soul with another crime."

"Foul scoundrel, you will then have the world know in the end that your son is my child, and that the name of Rupel has been steeped in infamy."

"It must be so," groaned Sir Robert, who had taken a seat and bowed his head upon his arms.



The will caught on fire and was burning up.

"Hearken to me, Robert Rupel," cried Madge Babbington, who was now so excited that she looked like a crazy woman, with her hair streaming down her back, "hearken to me: If you don't see that William Rupel has his rights, and is not disgraced, I will. He is my child, and I love him. He thinks that his mother is dead, but he shall know that she is alive, and that she lives to protect him, and to prevent you from disgracing him before the whole world. He is the lawful heir to the Croyden estates, and if it is within my power to retain those estates for him, he shall have them."

"Madge, this is impossible," cried Sir Robert. "I have already made my will in favor of my son Clarence."

"If you have, you must destroy it this very night. Where is the will?"

"Here it is on the table."

Sir Robert lifted the document from the table and held it in his hand.

"Burn it," ordered Madge Babbington. Sir Robert did as he was commanded. It seemed now as if he could not resist doing anything the woman ordered him to do, so great was her influence over him. The will caught on fire and was burning up. The room was filled with smoke. Madge Babbington was the first to notice it, and she looked around to see if anything was burning. She thought that it might be only the smoke from the burning paper which had been blown into the room by the wind from the chimney. The storm was still raging furiously without, and there were no signs of its abating. Madge Babbington was not satisfied with this examination, so she went to the study-door, opened it, and was about to look into the hall when she started back with a fearful scream as dense clouds of smoke rolled into the room and almost suffocated her. She saw in an instant that the house was on fire, and that unless she acted quickly she would be burned up. She made her way back to the chair where she had left Sir Robert sitting, but when she reached it she discovered that he had gone. While she stood wondering what had become of him, she heard the report of a pistol, and an instant afterwards there was a groan, and Sir Robert Rupel fell by her side dead. She bent over the man who had deceived her and tried to get him to speak, but he answered not a word.

"He is dead," she murmured, and then started to her feet as she discovered that the fire had approached nearer, and that it was about to envelop the room in its flames.

"I must be quick, or I, too, will die. The papers—where are they? Ah! here they are!" she joyfully exclaimed, as she found the papers on the table and quickly put them in her pocket. She then started in the direction of the door opposite to the one that led into the hall, and which connected the study with the art gallery. She succeeded in reaching the door at last. The flames from the hall drew nearer and nearer. It would not be many minutes before they would reach her. She flung open the door and then jumped back in affright as flames darted into her face. She was hemmed in on all sides by the fire, and it was evident that it would not be long before she would be burned to death.

"Heavens!" she moaned as she fell on her knees and lifted up her hands, "spare me, I pray Thee, so that I may see my son gain his rights!"

It seemed as if her prayer was answered, for she bounded to her feet and rushed to the side of the room that the flames had not yet reached.

"I ought to know this house well," she cried. "If my memory serves me right, there used to be a secret passage leading from this room to the vaults. Ah, I have it; here's the spring."

Madge Babbington was on her knees in the corner of the room, and with her hands was feeling for something. At last her right hand touched a ring in the side of the wall, and she gave it a sudden jerk. A door flew open, and the secret passage was disclosed to her view. The flames were now upon her, and her dress was already on fire. Not waiting a moment, she sprang into the passage and pulled the door to after her, thus baffling the fire demon for a time. She put out the fire that was burning a portion of her dress, and then commenced a hasty descent to the vaults beneath the Abbey. Down, down she went into the bowels of the earth, until she finally came to the opening of a long and narrow passage-way.

"Let me think a moment," she muttered, as she stopped at the foot of the stairway. "I ought to remember where this leads to. In the old days when we were boy and girl, Robert and I used to play hide-and-seek in and out of these vaults. Now I remember where this passage leads. It goes under the chapel, and finally ends in the vault that is situated beneath the altar. I will hurry in."

Madge Babbington went on until she came to the vault. The old stone coffins were still there, as they had been in her girlhood days. It did not take her long to lift off the top of the altar, and she was soon standing in the center of the chapel. The chapel was warm, owing to the fact that it was Saturday, and a large fire had been built in a stove to make it comfortable for Sunday. The woman tried to open the door, but she found that she could not, as her strength was slowly giving way. She sat down in a pew, to rest before she made another attempt to get out. She could hear the cries of the people as they worked to put the fire out. As she listened and tried to discover what they were saying, a horrible thought took possession of her, and she cried:

"They told me that William was in bed. Suppose he should not wake up? The fire will burn him to death!"

This was the last word she uttered for many hours, for she sank unconscious upon the floor, from weakness caused by the excitement through which she had passed.

We will return to the abbey and see what is taking place. Sir Robert's valet returned to the servants' hall, after he had left Madge Babbington alone with his master, and commenced to have a good time with his companions. They, like Madge Babbington, were suddenly startled by the smoke, and when they started to find out where it came from, they discovered that the flames were issuing from the art gallery. They speedily gave the alarm, and all the inmates of the house, with the exception of Sir Robert and Madge Babbington, were able to escape. Every one worked with a will, and when it was discovered that Sir Robert was missing, and the valet

told where he was, many efforts were made to get into the study, but all of these proved of no avail. The fire was finally extinguished after about an hour's work, and then it was discovered how it had originated.

A girl had been ordered to build a fire in the art gallery, and, after she had done so, she had left the door of the stove open. A spark flew out and set a rug on fire, and, no one being near at the time, the conflagration soon spread and destroyed all of the valuable pictures. It soon reached the hall, and then burst into the study when Madge Babbington opened the door.

When the fire was all out William and Clarence Rupel went into the study to look for their father's remains. They at last found the charred body and had it removed. They found the pistol, but did not suspect that Sir Robert had committed suicide. But what had become of the woman? was the question that everybody asked, after they had made a thorough search among the ruins, but could find no trace of her body. The valet said that he had left her with Sir Robert a few minutes before the fire, and it was impossible for her to leave the house unless seen by the servants.

As morning dawned the storm cleared away, and the sun shone brightly upon the havoc that

had been done the night before. In the village there was very little sorrow expressed at Sir Robert's death; if the truth were known, there was great rejoicing among the tenantry. They were now rid of a hard task-master and a man who had no sympathy for any one. There was not a person in the whole country but respected William Rupel and would do anything for him. He was a kind friend of the laboring man, and during his career in the House of Commons he had worked hard for the industrial classes. His nature was entirely different from his father's, and where Sir Robert acted in a stern and unsympathetic manner toward a tenant, he would help the poor man out of his own pocket, and thus make amends, in a measure. Up to this time his character had remained unblemished. He was never known to do anything underhand or mean, and for this honesty in political matters he had gained a great many friends and a host of enemies, who would have done anything to have overthrown his power. He was becoming more and more popular every day among the people, and if his popularity continued there was no telling but what he might become a great power in directing the affairs of the nation.

(To be continued)

AN EXTRAORDINARY EXCHANGE

(From an old manuscript by Jean La Rue)

TWO Parisian merchants, strongly united in friendship, had each one child of different sexes, who early contracted a strong inclination for each other, which was cherished by the parents, and they were flattered with the expectations of being joined together for life. Unfortunately, at the time they thought themselves on the point of completing this long-wished-for union, a man, far advanced in years, and possessed of an immense fortune, cast his eyes on the young lady and made proposals; her parents could not resist the temptation of a son-in-law in such affluent circumstances, and forced her to comply. As soon as the knot was tied she strictly enjoined her former lover never to see her, and patiently submitted to her fate; but the anxiety of her mind preyed upon her body, which threw her into a lingering illness that apparently carried her off, and she was consigned to her grave. As soon as this melancholy event reached the lover his affliction was doubled, being deprived of all hopes of her widowhood; but, recollecting that in her youth she had been for some time in lethargy, his hopes revived and hurried him to the place of her burial, where a good bribe procured the sexton's permission to dig her up, which he performed, and removed her to a place of safety, where, by proper methods, he revived the almost extinguished spark

of life. Great was her surprise at finding the state she had been in, and probably as great was her pleasure at the means by which she had been recalled from the grave. As soon as she was sufficiently recovered the lover laid his claim, and his reasons, supported by a powerful inclination on her side, were too strong for her to resist; but as France was no longer a place of safety for them they agreed to remove to England, where they continued ten years, when a strong inclination of revisiting their native country seized them, which they thought they might safely gratify, and accordingly performed their voyage.

The lady was so unfortunate as to be known by her old husband, whom she met in a public walk, and all her endeavors to disguise herself were ineffectual. He laid his claim to her before a court of justice, and the lover defended his right, alleging the husband, by burying her, had forfeited his title, and that he had acquired a just one by freeing her from the grave and delivering her from the jaws of death. These reasons, whatever weight they might have in a court where love presided, seemed to have little effect on the grave sages of the law, and the lady, with her lover, not thinking it safe to wait the determination of the court, prudently retired out of the country.

THE RAJAH'S CHESSMAN

BY ERNEST DELANCEY PIERSON

THE street he entered was remote and shabby.

At one time in the city's history it must have been an aristocratic quarter, but now was given over to the poorest classes. The fine iron work about the doors and windows was eaten with rust, while the walls of the buildings were seamed and scarred as if they had stood through a bombardment.

The gloomy desolation of the place with its relics of former grandeur accorded well with the young man's mood. Life for him had lost its savor and only the memories of the past remained.

What surprised Lascelle was to find in such a mean street a shop devoted to the sale of curios. Loving art in all its phases, he could not resist the temptation to stop and peer in the window.

At first his eyes, unaccustomed to the light, caught only a confused jumble of colors, but he soon saw that he had stumbled upon a veritable museum of treasures.

Thinking to divert his mind, he stepped through the open doorway, almost tripping over a bronze idol with six outstretched arms that seemed set like a sinister guardian over the place.

Wherever his eyes turned he saw curios of unique value in grotesque confusion, like the refuse of an auction room.

A Roman chair of ebony, curiously inwrought with brass, supported a dancing girl of the modern French school, whose white throat was encircled with a shell necklace from the South Seas. A frail-looking spinet with mother-of-pearl keys, displayed on its top a silver mirror of Florentine design, before which a hideous Chinese monster was leering in squat ugliness. Near by a curious set of chessmen in ebony and ivory attracted the young man's attention, and he could not resist the temptation to take them up, one by one, and examine them.

"You are fond of chess?" said a voice at his elbow.

Lascelle started as if caught in some guilty act. It was only a withered old man in a long, faded dressing-gown, his gleaming bald head partly hidden by a black velvet cap. Seen under any other circumstances this hawk-like face and shriveled figure would have seemed bizarre and grotesque, but here he was just suited to his surroundings, a curio come to life.

"Chess is a noble game," continued the old man, moving his thin, pale lips together. "When I was young it was my passion in life, but now that I am old, I must spare my brain and thought for more serious things."

"As you say," replied Lascelle, "it drains the brain—for that I have given up playing myself." Again he fingered the chessmen, feeling a pleasure

in the contact like a gambler who touches the familiar cards after a long abstinence. He sighed deeply and put them down, feeling the old desire to play rise strong within him above all efforts of his will.

"It is always a pleasure for me to meet with a true lover of art," said the dealer, breaking the thread of his thoughts. "If you will trouble yourself to follow me I will show you the choicest of my collection and which the crowd never see. Come," and Lascelle followed, for despite his first feeling of repulsion there was something magnetic about the patriarch.

They passed to the end of the shop, and descending a short flight of steps entered a room, which in other days should have been the library of the mansion. Empty, it must have been a commodious apartment, but now every available corner was occupied with strange and curious things, the relics of the ages.

"Sit down," said the old man, pushing towards his guest a teak-wood chair, richly inlaid with brass. "Look about you, while I prepare some refreshment," and he busied himself making coffee over a copper brazier, filled with glowing charcoal, which stood on a tripod near by. The sunlight, sifting through the bamboo screens that hid the windows, caused every shining object in the room to coruscate like jewels of many facets. Wherever the young man's eyes wandered they encountered some masterpiece in its way, unique, matchless. All this magnificence was tossed recklessly about in prodigal profusion, but in a tortoise-shell, inlaid with gold, having a crystal front, the cream of the collection was preserved; uncut jewels, Tanagra figures, semi-precious stones carved curiously, and a set of chess of silver and iron exquisitely enameled and carved.

"Ah! I see you are admiring my chessmen," said the old man, at his elbow. "Truly, there are none others like them in the whole world."

He arranged two cups of delicate porcelain on the table and filled them with the blackest of coffee.

"They are for sale?" asked Lascelle, sipping his beverage.

"Never, nor anything else in that case. As for the chess, I bought them of an English sailor, who said they had once belonged to the Rajah of Hyderabad. I got them for twenty dollars."

"Twenty dollars!" exclaimed Lascelle, in astonishment. "The man was mad!"

"No doubt, for he had all of a sailor's superstitions exaggerated through his slavery to drugs. He would have parted with them for less, but I was in a generous mood. They carried a curse, he said; misfortunes had followed him ever since they came into his possession." The old dealer

smiled grimly. "That was years ago, but the fate that awaits the owner of these chess has not overtaken me—yet," and he dipped his lips in the cup.

"Do you know," he said, after a pause, "that sometimes I fancy there is something almost human about those chessmen. Often when I am half dreaming over a problem, some hidden force seems to guide my hand. Ah, my friend, I have laid out some famous campaigns with those men. I should not fear to meet a master of the game with those little fellows in my service."

So this absurd old man rambled on; evidently living so long among curious things had affected his brain, and made of his mind a storehouse of weird and wondrous fancies.

But as Lascelle looked again at the men in the case, it seemed to him that the Kings and Queens and Knights wore an alert look that was almost human, the tiny horses tugged at their bridles, and the faces of the little men and women became firm with resolve.

The old dealer took his treasures out of the case and set them upon a teak-wood board inlaid with ivory, which he laid on the table, after removing the cups. To Lascelle, it seemed as if he were looking down on a battlefield through the wrong end of a field-glass. He felt that he would not have been surprised to hear the horses neigh and see the sparks of flashing swords. Mechanically he picked up a little ivory Queen. Had his misfortune of the last week unsettled his brain? He could have sworn that the Queen moved in his palm like a living thing.

So many chess-players of eminence had gone mad—was he to be numbered, too, with those who had fallen victims to the game?

"Come!" broke in the old man on his thoughts. "You look like one in need of distraction. Let us play a game; there is nothing like it to divert the mind. But," and a smile puckered up his thin lips, "I warn you that I am a formidable antagonist—I never lose."

Lascelle still felt a pride in his skill, and despite his determination never to play again, he could not pass such a challenge by unnoticed. He would teach this old fool a lesson—show him that the chessmen were not endowed with any supernatural powers, but were like any others, save in their workmanship. With nervous fingers he began to arrange the men on the board without saying a word.

Confident of success, Lascelle played an aggressive game. The old man, without betraying the least excitement, with half-closed eyes, seemed far away in thought, yet his moves were brilliant and rapid. Mechanically his hand rose, and then rested on the piece he meant to play, trembled a moment, and then moved across the board. It was as if some other force was at work making the moves. There was something so uncanny about the old man's play as to suggest the supernatural. Lascelle watched him with a feeling akin to terror, and blundered in his game. He felt like one

who is fighting with an opponent in the dark who could see him, but whom he could not see. One by one his men had been swept away, but suddenly the old man uttered a cry, let the piece fall he was about to play, and clutched at his heart.

Before Lascelle could even speak he had drawn a small vial from his breast, and uncorking it, pressed it to his lips. The color returned to his lips in a moment.

"Heart trouble," he said, briefly; "I am subject to it; don't be alarmed, it is not likely to happen again to-day. Besides, I have a sovereign restorer here," pointing to the vial which he had laid on the table. "It has saved my life many a time when I should have perished for want of it. Let us go on; I shall not make such a scene again." Lascelle, once more under the fascinating spell of the game, continued to play.

The attack had left traces on the old man's features, but if anything he played even more brilliantly than before. In vain did Lascelle put forth all his powers; the very evil one seemed fighting against him. There could be but one outcome to the game, he was beaten, and that, too, by a doddering old man, half palsied.

There was only one explanation, which, as absurd as it seemed, he could not dismiss, and that was that some mysterious force was at work which had won for his opponent the game.

What might he not accomplish with the Rajah's chessmen, how he could turn his enemy's triumph into defeat, and become the invincible chess player of the world!

He must, he would possess the chess, even if they cost him his entire fortune. But would the dealer sell?

"Mate!" exclaimed the old man, "as I told you at the start, I have won, but you play a pretty game, young man, a very pretty game—one might say almost as good as a professional."

Lascelle winced.

"I am out of practice," he said, a little sullenly, "and my thoughts were elsewhere. Had I been in better form, you would not have had such an easy victory." He was fencing for an opening to make a bid for the chess.

"It would have been just the same," continued his opponent, with a provoking smile. "The owner of these chess can never be beaten," and he began to roll a cigarette with his long tobacco-stained fingers.

Lascelle was silent for a moment, and chewed the end of his mustache reflectively.

"I will give you ten thousand dollars for those chessmen," he said, briefly. "Not because they possess any occult power, but on account of their workmanship, which is unique and precious."

"I told you they were not for sale," said the dealer, puffing slowly on his cigarette.

"Come, I will double it; you have other sets almost as beautiful. The man must certainly be mad to refuse such an offer. His provoking calmness was unbearable, but he knew that to gain his

point he must appear outwardly calm. To every offer he made, the dealer repeated with monotonous reiteration, "They are not for sale."

"But you are an old man; you have not many years to live," urged Lascelle; "you cannot carry them with you to the grave—"

"But I can destroy them before I go. No, it is useless to tempt me—it is only a waste of time. As for dying, I have many years before me to enjoy life. I am strong—"

He never completed the sentence, the old look of agony came into his face, and a hoarse cry broke from his parted lips. He struggled to reach the vial on the table. Lascelle, with a quick jerk of his wrist, sent the tiny bottle out of reach. It shattered in fragments on the floor. The old man tried to struggle from his chair, clinging desperately to the edge of the table to steady himself. Lascelle huddled where he sat, watching him with hard, unpitied eyes. With a convulsive effort, summoning up the last atom of his strength, the dying man staggered to his feet, and, pointing a shaking finger at Lascelle, uttered a word which faded on his lips. For a moment only he stood there, then his long arms helplessly beat the air, and crashing down upon the table, he rolled over on the floor.

Lascelle had not moved, and for some time he sat there staring at vacancy. The strange surroundings, the rapidity with which the scene had passed, all seemed so unreal that his mind at first could not grasp its deadly import. He waited as if hoping that presently he should wake up and find that after all it was only a dream of a disordered brain.

But there lay that thing on the floor, and though he turned his face away, he could not shut out the sight. Hurriedly he tore down a piece of tapestry from the wall and flung it over the body, but the fierce eyes seemed to pursue him still.

On the table stood the chess huddled in irregular groups, and to his frightened fancy they seemed to have drawn together to discuss the tragedy. They were his now to do with as he willed, and for the moment he forgot the lifeless clay at his feet. After all, what was the snuffing out of that feeble taper compared to the prize he had won? He had but forestalled fate a very little while.

With eager hands now grown calm he crowded the chessmen into his pockets and hurried to the door. Here he paused a moment to listen, but only the ordinary street sounds fell on his ear. Yet as he glided through the doorway he thought he heard a mocking laugh, harsh and discordant, from within, that dodged his steps, and all the walls took up the sound and re-echoed it. With a shudder of horror he turned and fled as if for his life out into the street. After the gloom of the shop the blessed sunlight seemed to fall on him like a benediction, and he breathed more freely. Casting a hurried look around to satisfy himself that he had not been observed, Lascelle glided away.

"George, it cannot be too late for you to withdraw; you can plead illness—anything! Do it for my sake." She laid her hand lightly on his shoulder as she spoke and looked earnestly down in his eyes.

The lamps had not been lit in the drawing-room, and they sat in the embrasure of the window. She was a pretty girl, and there was tenderness in her touch and tone that moved Lascelle, and for the moment he found himself wavering. Then he laughed uneasily.

"It would be absurd at this late hour, Leila, and you know I have so much at stake. Every penny I own has been placed on this game. Instead of having to face the world with respectable penury we shall be quite rich—"

"But if you should lose?"

"Lose? I cannot! I cannot explain to you, nor would you understand if I attempted to, but there is no possible chance of my losing."

He spoke up bravely, but even as the words left his lips it seemed to him as if he felt a cold breath of air pass across his face, damp and grave-like. He shuddered. It was silly of him to become fearful at this hour when victory was so near at hand.

"I must leave you now, Leila," stooping to kiss her softly. "Have no fear of the outcome, and I promise you that after to-night I will never play again."

She sighed, seeing that it was useless to attempt to dissuade him further.

"And you will come and tell me when it is all over?" she said, following him to the door. "You know I shall not sleep a wink until I am sure of the result."

"You shall be the first to hear the good news," he said; then, as if not daring to trust himself longer in her presence, he hurried away.

If Lascelle's conscience had troubled him since he came into possession of the mysterious chessmen, the world in which he moved saw nothing of it. He was, if anything, in better spirits than when he went away. If his gaiety had a false ring and his laughter was at times forced, no one troubled himself analyzing the causes.

As for the chess, he had often tested their curious powers, and they had never failed him. Secretly he had made a good deal of money in private wagers, and to-night he would win a fortune that would enable him to marry the woman he had loved so long. He would not let her sacrifice herself for a life of polite penury, so he had planned this last coup to raise his fortune to a comfortable figure. It was strange that the secret which had lain so lightly upon him all these weeks to-night should be so heavy to bear. Why should he feel despondent? No accusing voice could now rise up against him. The only witness was underground and forgotten. What had he to fear?

Promptly at eight o'clock he sat down before a chess table in the Progress Club, where the members and a few admirers of the game had assembled to witness the contest. His opponent—

a bearded Belgian with an abnormally high forehead—was drumming impatiently on the table with his fingers. Lascelle provided his own chess, and it was remarked that he seemed to be ill at ease, and did not play with his usual calmness. Several times he let a piece fall when making a move, but as the game proceeded some of his old confidence returned. Like slaves of his will the little pieces were doing their duty. A frown gathered on his opponent's face as he saw his men swept away with monotonous regularity. Lascelle, now confident of victory, began to think of Leila, the future, and a hundred other things that had no connection with the game. He lapsed into a dreamy mood, assured that the chess would work out their own salvation.

Suddenly he started. One of his Knights had been taken! He was wide awake now and on the alert. A Queen was captured! What could this mean? Were the chess about to play him false? His brain was reeling with a sudden dizziness and all the pieces seemed staggering about the board. He played on with a dogged fury, losing ground by degrees and gaining nothing. He tried to bend his mind on the game, but it was too late, and he blundered hopelessly. The professional-looking opponent lost his frown and brightened visibly.

The provoking coolness of his opponent only served to excite Lascelle's feelings. "Mate in five moves," said the Belgian, in a low voice. "One," bringing down his Queen on the table. Lascelle could not solve his neighbor's method of reasoning, or see how it was possible to force a mate in five moves. He was soon to learn.

They played on, then Lascelle saw that he had been led into a skillfully laid trap. His King had now only one move followed by mate. The chess that he had sinned to possess had betrayed him! He nerved himself to make the last move, hoping for the impossible. What a strange hand had his opponent—long-fingered, with claw-like nails!

He raised his eyes with a feeling of horror. The Belgian sat smiling in his place, but beside him, bending over and guiding his hand, stood a gray, indistinct figure. It raised its face and looked at Lascelle with burning eyes.

Again he heard that mocking sound which had rung in his ears since that dreadful day he had fled in terror from the scene of his sin.

"Five—mate!" cried his opponent jubilantly.

But Lascelle did not hear; he was staring fixedly before him. Then he threw back his head and laughed. His mind was broken.

PHANTOM OF THE GROVE

By PROFESSOR SARDINI

PROFESSOR KIEL of the American University in the former part of his time resided in Maine, where he followed the profession of a physician. One day, being invited to dine with a party of gentlemen, after dinner coffee was brought in. An animated conversation commenced, various subjects were introduced, and at length the discourse turned upon apparitions, etc. Kiel was amongst those who strenuously combated the idea of supernatural visitations as preposterous and absurd in the highest degree. A gentleman, who was a captain in the army, with equal zeal supported the opposite side of the question.

The question, was long and warmly contested, both being men of superior talents, till in the end the attention of the whole company was engrossed by the dispute. At length the captain proposed to Kiel to accompany him that evening to his country house, where, if he did not convince him of the reality of supernatural agency, he would then allow himself—in the estimation of the present company, to whom he appealed as judges—to be defeated. The professor, with a laugh, instantly consented to the proposal if the captain, on his honor, would promise that no trick should be played off upon him. The captain readily gave his word and honor that no imposition or trick

should be resorted to, and here for the present the matter rested. Wine and tobacco now circulated briskly, and the afternoon passed in the utmost harmony and conviviality. The captain took his glass cheerfully, while Kiel prudently reserved himself to be completely on his guard against any maneuver that might be practised in order to deceive him, or, as he properly observed, "to be in full and sober possession of his faculties, that whatever should be presented to his sight might be examined through the medium of his reason." The company broke up at rather an early hour, and the captain and Kiel set out together on their spiritual adventure. When they drew near the captain's house he suddenly stopped near the entrance to a small grove of trees. They descended from their automobile and walked towards the grove. The captain traced a large circle on the ground, into which he requested Kiel to enter. He then solemnly asked him if he possessed sufficient resolution to remain there alone to complete the adventure, to which Kiel replied in the affirmative. He added further:

"Whatever you may witness, stir not, I charge you, from this spot till you see me again; if you step beyond this circle it will be your immediate destruction."

He then left the professor, who could not re-

frain from smiling at what he thought the assumed solemnity of his acquaintance and the whimsical situation in which he was placed. The night was clear and frosty and the stars shone with a peculiar brilliancy; he looked around on all sides to observe whence he might expect his ghostly visitant. He directed his glance towards the grove of trees; he perceived a small spark of fire at a considerable distance within its gloomy shade. It advanced nearer; he then concluded it was a torch borne by some person who was in the captain's secret and who was to personate a ghost. It advanced nearer and more near; the light increased; it approached the edge of the circle wherein he was placed.

"It was then," to use his own expressions, "I seemed surrounded with a fiery atmosphere; the heavens and every object before visible were excluded from my sight."

But now a figure of the most undefinable description absorbed his whole attention; his imagination had never yet conceived anything so truly fearful. What appeared to him the more remarkable was an awful benignity portrayed in its countenance, and with which it appeared to regard him. He contemplated this dreadful object, but at length fear began insensibly to arrest his faculties. He sank down on his knees to implore the protection of Heaven. His eyes were riveted on the mysterious appearance, which remained stationary and earnestly regarded him. At every repetition of the name of the Almighty it assumed a more benignant expression of countenance, whilst a terrific brilliancy gleamed from its eyes. He fell prostrate on the ground, fervently imploring Heaven to remove the object of his terror.

"Are you convinced that what you have now witnessed was supernatural?" the captain asked.

Kiel replied "he could not give a determinate answer to that question; he could not, on natural principles, account for what he had seen, it certainly was not like anything earthly; he therefore begged to be excused from saying any more on a subject which he could not comprehend."

The captain replied "he was sorry he was not convinced"; and added with a sigh "he was still more sorry that he had ever attempted to convince him."

Thus far it may be considered as no more than a common phantasmagorical trick, played off on the credulity of the professor, but in the end the performer paid dearly for his exhibition. He had, like a person ignorant of a complicated piece of machinery, given impetus to a power which he has not the knowledge to control and which in the end proves fatal to him who puts it in motion. Kiel now assumed a gaiety which was very foreign to his feelings; his thought, in spite of his endeavors, were perpetually recurring to the events of the evening; but in proportion, as he forced conversation, the captain evidently declined it, becoming more and more thoughtful and abstracted every moment. After supper Kiel chal-

lenged his friend to take a glass of wine, hoping it would rouse him from those reflections which seemed to press so heavy on his mind. But the wine and the professor's discourse were alike disregarded; nothing could dispel the settled melancholy which seemed to deprive him of the power of speech. I must observe that immediately after supper the captain had ordered all his servants to bed. It drew towards midnight, and he remained still absorbed in thought, but apparently not wishing to retire to bed. Kiel was silently smoking his pipe when on a sudden a heavy step is heard in the passage; it approaches the room in which they are sitting. A knock is heard; the captain raises his head and looks mournfully at Kiel. The knock is repeated—both are silent; a third knock is heard, and Kiel breaks the silence by asking his friend why he does not order the person in. Ere the captain could reply the room-door was flung wildly open, when behold! the same dreadful appearance which Kiel had already witnessed stood in the doorway. Its awful benignity of countenance was now changed into the most appalling and terrific frown. A large dog which was in the room crept whining and trembling behind the captain's chair. For a few moments the figure remained stationary and then motioned the captain to follow it; he rushed towards the door, the figure receded before him, and Kiel, determined to accompany his friend, followed with the dog. They proceeded unobstructed into the courtyard; the doors and gates seemed to open spontaneously before them. From the courtyard they passed into the open fields; Kiel, with the dog, was about twenty or thirty paces behind the captain. At length they reached the spot near to the entrance of the grove where the circle was traced; the figure stood still, when of a sudden a bright column of flame shot up, a loud shriek was heard, a heavy body seemed to fall from a considerable height, and in a moment after all was silence and darkness. Kiel called loudly on the captain, but received no answer. Alarmed for the safety of his friend, he fled back to the house and quickly assembled the family. They proceeded to the spot and found the apparently lifeless body of the captain stretched on the ground. The professor ascertained on examination that the heart still beat faintly; he was instantly conveyed home, and all proper means were resorted to to restore animation; he revived a little and seemed sensible of their attentions, but remained speechless till his death, which took place in three days after. Down one side, from head to foot, the flesh was livid and black as if from a fall or severe bruise. The affair was hushed up in the immediate neighborhood, and his sudden death was attributed to apoplexy.

But the professor finally deduced from the circumstance that the captain was a powerful hypnotist and had put Kiel under his influence, making him think he had seen a hideous ghostly manifestation.

CURRENT NEWS

ELECTRICITY REPLACES KEROSENE IN LOCOMOTIVE HEADLIGHTS.

It is announced that the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad has commenced the installation of electric headlights on all of its locomotives, totalling about 2,500. The improvement will be made at the rate of from 75 to 100 engines a month.

CHINAMAN FINDS \$200.

Chen Waung, a Chinese cook of Roseburg, Ore., recently found \$200 in gold in the house of Hop Lee. He says that the ghost of his murdered friend directed him to the treasure. The money was found in a paper bag in plain sight of all who entered a room that had never been occupied since the murder.

CORSET SAVES HER LIFE.

The life of Mrs. Frederick Landroche of Hancock, Mich., was probably saved by a corset stay. Her husband, arraigned in court on a charge of non-support, asked for permission to speak to his wife. This being granted, he pulled a revolver and fired twice. One shot went wild, the other was deflected by the corset stay. Before Landroche could fire again he was overpowered.

AUSTRALIA IMPORTS \$6,000,000 IN AUTOS.

Australia imported more than \$6,000,000 worth of motor cars and accessories during 1916. During the last two years the imports have been as follows: Motor chassis, \$1,812,912 in 1915 and \$4,749,104 in 1916; motor car bodies, \$472,994 and \$1,521,141; motorcycles, \$138,393 and \$588,705; and manufacturers of rubber, \$832,735 and \$2,939,131.

WOMEN AS BUILDERS OF OUR AIRCRAFT.

Among fields which are soon to be thrown open for the first time to American women because of the growing shortage of men in industrial fields, is that of aircraft construction. Fortunately, this is one field in which women are said to excel, especially in the making of wings and wing surfaces. Already one of the leading American aircraft constructors has stated that more than 60 per cent. of his employees making wings are women.

SOYA BEANS AS FOOD.

The Soya bean promises to become one of the most important food materials of the vegetable kingdom. Milk in either a powdered or a liquid form is either produced from it, the oil can be hardened into an edible fat or used satisfactorily as a substitute for linseed oil, the beans in the natural state make a palatable, nutritious dish when properly cooked, and the pulp which remains after the oil has been expressed is excellent for feeding to livestock.

CONVICTS MAY KNIT FOR SOLDIERS.

A plan to have some of the prisoners at the Folsome State Penitentiary knit for Uncle Sam's soldiers in the trenches was suggested recently by Joseph Stephens, chairman of the local branch of the Red Cross, to Gov. William D. Stephens and received favorable consideration. The local Red Cross has a number of knitting machines for making socks, sweaters and "helmets" for the soldiers, and it is planned to let the prisoners use these if the authorities favor the scheme.

WORKMEN GETTING \$10 A DAY IN BRIDGEPORT.

An era of extravagant wages has set in, according to C. E. Bilton, president of the Manufacturers' Association. Workmen in factories in Bridgeport, Conn., are getting \$50 a week in a large proportion of cases, while \$70 and up is not uncommon.

All lines of manufacture are affected. Factories are paying 60 cents an hour for unskilled men, and cannot hold them even on those rates. Street laborers now get \$4 a day.

CLERKS, ETC., WANTED FOR NATIONAL ARMY.

Announcement was made recently that the Quartermaster Corps, National Army, requires for immediate service in France about 150 stock clerks, office clerks, stenographers, etc., for service with stevedore regiments. Recent report erroneously increased this number to a regiment, but there were only 150 vacancies in all. Enlistment is for the duration of the war. Applications should be made to Capt. M. A. Kerwin, 39 Whitehall street, New York City. Those joining will be eligible for advancement according to their efficiency.

MAY FIT DUTCH SOLDIERS WITH WOODEN-SOLED SHOES.

Consul Frank W. Mahin, at Amsterdam, has made the following report:

The commander-in-chief of the Dutch army notifies the corps commanders that an experiment is to be made with wooden soles for shoes in consequence of the increasing advance in the price of leather.

For the experiment, 5,000 pairs of shoes will be made; 2,000 are now ready. The wooden soles will be on new shoes, each pair having an extra set to replace worn-out soles.

The wooden soles are first soaked in water to increase their flexibility.

When a definite judgment of the experiment can be formed, and if it is found feasible, it will be extended on a large scale.

JAPS MAKE PAPER CLOTHES.

Underclothing made of finely crisped or grained paper is manufactured in Japan. After the paper has been cut to a pattern the different parts are sewn together and hemmed, and the places where the buttonholes are to be formed are strengthened with calico or linen. The paper is very strong and at the same time very flexible. After a garment has been worn a few hours it will interfere with the perspiration of the body no more than do garments made of cotton fabric. The paper is not sized, nor is it impermeable. After becoming wet the paper is difficult to tear. When an endeavor is made to tear it by hand it presents almost as much resistance as the thin skin for making gloves.

ORDERED FOR FOREIGN SERVICE.

Two of the ten battalions of the Forestry Regiment now organizing at American University, D. C., have been ordered to prepare for foreign service. These men will play an important part in the establishment of the main base in France and in preparation of the long line of communications to the sector of the front assigned to General Pershing. Commissions in the regiments are being issued on the recommendation of prominent lumber associations, after such recommendations are endorsed by the United States Forestry Service and then by the War Department. A long list of appointees to captaincies and the lieutenant grades have been prepared, but is temporarily held up.

ONLY SHIRT LAUNDERED WHILE HE WAITS.

J. J. C. Armstrong of the Vancouver, Wash., laundry asked a man who stepped into the office: "What can I do for you?"

"Can you wash and iron this shirt so I can get it this afternoon?" was the query.

"Certainly we can," said Mr. Armstrong.

"Have you a place where I can take it off?" the man asked. "This is the only shirt I happen to have."

He was shown a room, where he removed his shirt and emerged, his coat collar buttoned around his neck.

The shirt was laundered, the man was there to get it, thanked Mr. Armstrong, paid the bill, and went away smiling.

ARTIFICIAL LEGS FOR ANIMALS, HIS PLAN.

A new invention of artificial legs for horses and dogs was offered to the Philadelphia branch of the Red Star Animal Relief by a French-American veterinarian, who refuses to disclose his name.

This man, who, since the war started, has taken twenty-one trips to Europe with horses for France, claims that, although the horse or mule will no longer be good for active service, it may be used for light farm work if these legs are used.

The leg, or crutch, which has been used successfully in this country, is made of steel, with a special quadrant spring imitating the vertical and lateral flexings of the angle and fetlock. By means of this many crippled horses and mules, which would otherwise be killed, will be given a chance to live.

A TELEPHONE DEVICE WHICH LEAVES THE HANDS FREE.

Of the many devices which have from time to time been introduced for improving the telephone or for permitting the user the free use of his hands, one of the latest appears to be in every way ideal. It consists of a sound chamber over which can be placed the usual telephone receiver, and a bifurcated tube ending in ear-pieces. So in use the telephone receiver is removed from the hook and placed on the sound chamber, while the ear-pieces are placed in the ears; and the user, talking in the normal tone, can carry on a conversation with a party at the other end of the telephone without holding the receiver or stand. Furthermore, by splitting the sound and distributing it to the two ears, all extraneous noises are shut out and the conversation becomes much clearer.

WOMEN IN MEN'S PLACES.

Not many women are yet replacing men called to war service in America. The banks have added a few women clerks, but that is no novelty. The railroads, except in rare instances, are using women only for office work. When great American armies actually begin fighting, however, a different story may be expected. Heads of corporations with large numbers of employees forecast wholesale substitutions. Not until now has public opinion favored women's engaging in certain work involving great manual labor, but, if the forecasts are correct, such labor must fall to their lot here soon, though not to the same extent as in England and France. The munition makers say they can operate successfully with 70 per cent. of women. The garment industries have always used women, but increased business in uniform manufacturing will call for more. Similar predictions are made in regard to practically all the other industries.

UTAH SUGAR BEET FARMERS PLEDGE HELP TO REFINERS.

Ten thousand farmers, represented by the State Farm Bureau of Utah, have telegraphed assurance of their support in food conservation to the food administrator, through W. W. Armstrong, Federal food administrator for Utah, promised to supply beet-sugar factories to the limit of their capacity next year, and assured him that through their efforts their State has a surplus this year of 100,000 tons.

All differences between sugar refiners and farmers have been forgotten, the message says, and a contract on a profit-sharing basis agreed

upon. The food administrator wired this reply: "Splendid action of farmers of Utah is very much appreciated. Such action is particularly gratifying, and greatly fortifies me in the work I am undertaking."

INFLUENCED BY AUTO SUGGESTION.

Subtle hypnotic influences, working subconsciously on the mind of a man who was out of work and needed money badly, caused John Kly, Los Angeles, Cal., to become a counterfeiter. His story of how mental suggestion caused him to make bogus coins of small denominations failed, however, to give him his freedom, and he was sentenced to five years in prison.

Kly said the imprint of a half-dollar in the mud brought the first criminal thought. Next came a display of dentists' moulds in a window. This was followed by a desire to test his ability.

With a silver-plating outfit and home-made mould he finished several bad half-dollars. His landlady demanded rent. He had no money, and decided to give her the bad coins, which she accepted, and the coins fell into the hands of the police.

IMAGINED HIMSELF DEAD.

Records for keen imagination were shattered in the case of Edward Corrigan, of Los Angeles, who almost succeeded in killing himself with thought.

Corrigan is a young engineer and had been going with a girl with whom he quarreled. "The end will come in a couple of hours," he said in sepulchral tones. Shortly after he was found in bed in a comatose condition, and when folks entered his room he asked for a priest to administer the last rites.

Police Surgeon Zurb made a minute examination and thought Corrigan had taken poison. His eyes were dilated and his outward condition indicated poisonous symptoms. Treatment applied caused Dr. Zurb and other experts called in to believe the case was one of self-hypnotism caused by mental depression.

When Corrigan returned to his senses in the hospital he broke out in tears, saying he was despondent over his broken love affair.

WOMEN REFUSE TO WEAR OVERALLS.

Women employees of the Kansas City Terminal Coach Company recently won their fight against overalls when the company rescinded its order that all women employees in cleaning clothes must wear overalls.

The company's order gave the women several days to don the masculine attire or quit their jobs. Through the women's trade union the women took their case before the city factory inspector.

Legally the company is permitted to designate the clothing its employes shall wear while at work. L. A. Halbert, head of the welfare board found. An arbitration committee was appointed to adjust the matter.

The women protested because there were so many men working in the yards who would comment about their attire.

"Most of the workmen are gentlemen," one of the women remarked, "but some are not."

HORSE'S BITE BASIS OF HEAVY DAMAGE SUIT.

Alleging that she was permanently injured in an unusual way, Miss Anna Scanlon, of 289 Pine street, Jersey City, has started suit in the Hudson County Circuit Court to recover \$5,000 damages from James McConnell, trading under the name of the McConnell Coal Company, of Van Horne street, Jersey City.

According to the complaint filed by Miss Scanlon on November 28, 1916, while passing the American Type Foundry plant on Monitor street, she was compelled to walk around a horse attached to one of the McConnell Coal Company's delivery wagons. Without warning, the horse suddenly seized her by the arm with its teeth and severely lacerated the flesh and destroyed some of the muscles of the arm.

40,000 HOUSES DESTROYED.

A report from Havre states that the Belgian government has issued a *Gray Book* refuting allegations against Belgian civilians contained in the German *White Book* of May, 1915, in which it was said that Belgian civilians savagely attacked German troops in the early days of the war, and that the measures adopted by the Germans were necessary in the interest of the preservation of the German army.

According to the *Gray Book*, between 40,000 and 50,000 houses were destroyed by the Germans. It gives the approximate number of provinces as follows:

Antwerp, 3,533; Brabant, 5,833; West Flanders, 16,000; East Flanders, 2,500; Hainaut, 3,500; Liege, 3,444; Limbourg, 125; Luxembourg, 3,000; Namur, 5,243.

In the city of Ypres 3,700 houses were destroyed, the *Gray Book* says, and in Louvain 1,120.

TALLEST POLE PUT IN PLACE.

The largest military staff in the country, made of the mainmast and boom of the American cup winner *Columbia*, was put in place the other day in front of the Eighth Coast Artillery Armory, Jerome avenue and Kingsbridge Road, New York City, the largest armory in the world. The mast is 207 feet long, weighs seven tons, and is made of sheet steel reinforced. It was placed twelve feet in the ground in a concrete bed.

Col. E. F. Austin, in charge of the Eight Coast Defense Command, and Col. W. Walk, U. S. A., district commander of the Middle Atlantic Coast District, made a special trip from Fort Totten to view the erection of the mast. Major S. G. Teetz, commander of the depot, was also present.

Fourteen contractors refused the offer before W. Konop, of Ravenswood, L. I., consented to place the mast in position. The *Columbia* won the America cup in 1899 and in 1901. The sailing yacht was designed by Nathaniel Persher and was owned by J. P. Morgan.

BLAMES HYPNOTISM FOR LOSS OF WIFE'S LOVE.

A husband's objection to the alleged hypnotic influence over his wife excised by a woman school teacher resulted in an investigation by the Union Hill (N. J.) Board of Education.

Former Councilman Schumacher appeared before the board on behalf of P. Noeth, of Fourth street and Broadway, Union Hill. He charged Miss Emmeline Moller, of Public School No. 1, with having alienated the affections of his wife.

Miss Moller denied the allegation and complained she was being persecuted by Noeth and his friends. Toward the end of the meeting she handed in her resignation. President Bielings only explanation was that Miss Moller had resigned "for the good of the service."

NINE SONS OF CABINET OFFICERS SERVING WITH ARMY OR NAVY.

In response to several inquiries the following information is given concerning Cabinet members' sons who are serving with the army and navy:

William G. McAdoo, Jr., son of the Secretary of the Treasury, is under training in the Aviation Section in the Naval Reserve, and a second son, Robert H., has also enlisted in the Naval Reserve.

Josephus Daniels, Jr., son of the Secretary of the Navy, is a private in the United States Marine Corps.

Franklin K. Lane, Jr., son of the Secretary of the Interior, is a first lieutenant in the Signal Corps, under training to become an aviator.

David Franklin Houston, Jr., son of the Secretary of Agriculture, is an ensign in the navy.

Humphrey F. Redfield, son of the Secretary of Commerce, is an ensign in the navy.

William B. Wilson, Jr., son of the Secretary of Labor, is attending one of the officers' training camps. Another son, Joseph B., is a second lieutenant in the National Army, and a third son, James H., is a corporal of Field Artillery.

CHRISTMAS PACKAGES FOR UNITED STATES SOLDIERS IN FRANCE.

The Post-office Department authorizes the following:

It is essential that Christmas packages for American soldiers in France be mailed not later than November 15 in order to insure their delivery on Christmas morning.

Arrangements have been made for prompt delivery to the soldiers on Christmas morning.

In furtherance of this, Postmaster General Burleson, jointly with the Secretary of War and the

Secretary of the Navy, have issued the following notice to the public:

CHRISTMAS MAIL FOR AMERICAN FORCES ABROAD.

The time is approaching to give thought to bringing Christmas cheer to the American soldiers and sailors abroad.

Arrangements have been perfected whereby the Christmas mail to the American expeditionary forces in Europe is to be delivered by Christmas morning. Without the fullest co-operation on the part of the public it will be impossible to accomplish this result.

The three essential respects in which the public can aid in assuring a happy Christmas at the front are mail early, address intelligently, and pack securely. For this reason it is urgently requested that all persons having Christmas mail for the soldiers and sailors and the civilian units attached to the army in Europe observe closely the following directions:

DIRECTIONS FOR MAILING.

1. Mails to reach the soldiers in France by Christmas morning must be posted not later than November 15.

2. Every package must bear conspicuously the words "Christmas mail," the complete address of the person for whom it is intended, and in the upper left-hand corner the name and address of the sender.

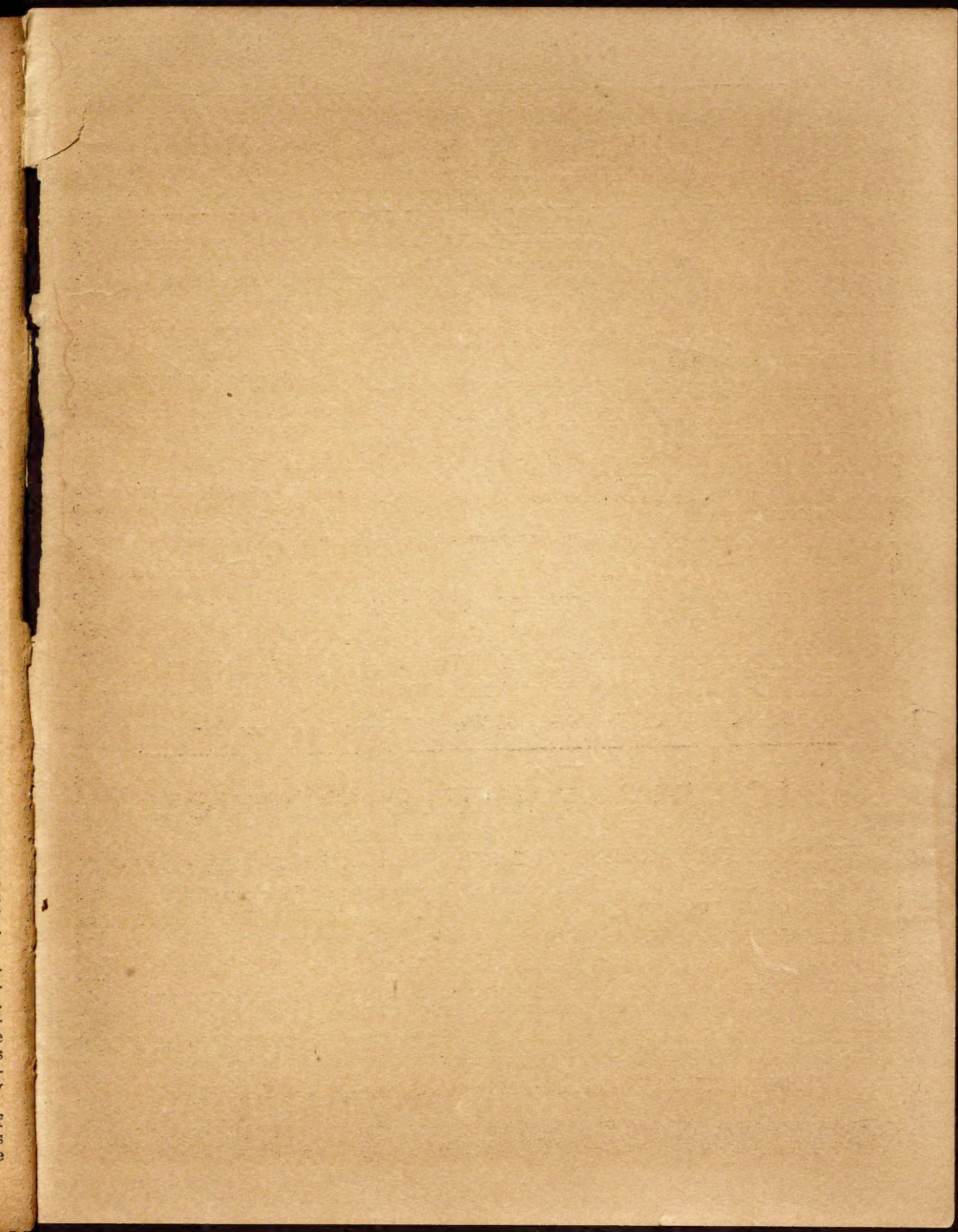
3. Every parcel must be so packed and wrapped as to admit of easy inspection by the postmaster. No parcel will be despatched to France which has not the postmaster's certificate that it contains no prohibited articles.

A. S. BURLESON, Postmaster General;
NEWTON D. BAKER, Secretary of War;
JOSEPHUS DANIELS, Secretary of Navy.

The time of sailing of transports and regular liners, the examination of parcels on this side so as to obviate their having to be examined by censors, and the uncertainty of land transportation on the other side has to be allowed for. It is essential also that the packages should contain nothing that is unavailable under the parcel post regulations of this country, and that the parcels shall be securely wrapped, but may be readily opened by the postmaster to determine the character of their contents.

Measures have been taken to have packages received in France, which are marked for Christmas delivery, delivered on Christmas morning. Parcels so marked will be held at convenient stations for delivery on that day. This will insure a real Christmas to our boys in France if parcels are mailed here promptly, and prevent the Christmas characters of the parcels being destroyed by too early delivery.

The rate of postage on parcels to members of the American expeditionary forces in France is twelve cents per pound from any place within the United States.



"Mystery Magazine"

CONTAINS BRILLIANT STORIES OF REAL MYSTERIES

OUT TWICE A MONTH.

FORTY-EIGHT PAGES.

HANDSOME COLORED COVERS.

WATCH FOR THE COMING NUMBERS.

Here are the titles of some of the remarkable feature stories:

ZITANA OF MAISON ROUGE

A powerful detective story, based on the mystery of spiritualism.

In No. 2, out Dec. 1st, 1917

THE MYSTERIOUS WEB

Thought transference is the occult science woven into this novelette.

In No. 3, out Dec. 15th, 1917

UNDER THE HYPNOTIC SPELL

It deals with the strange power of the Hindus in a weird, exciting tale.

In No. 4, out Jan. 1st, 1918

THE SILKEN SHEATH

An interesting story of deep mystery by a celebrated writer.

In No. 5, out Jan. 15th, 1918

THE FORTUNE-TELLER'S SECRET

Based on the art of Palmistry. This story is intensely fascinating.

In No. 6, out Feb. 1st, 1918

THE MYSTIC EMBLEM

A rousing detective story replete with exciting situations.

In No. 7, out Feb. 15th, 1918

Each number will also contain a variety of splendid short stories, a continuation of the serial, and some interesting articles by the best writers.

TELL ALL YOUR FRIENDS ABOUT THIS MAGAZINE.

It Is the Biggest Ten Cents Worth on Earth.

More wonderful stories by the most celebrated fiction writers are coming in each issue. They are entirely different from the ordinary type, and will positively hold your interest from beginning to end. For sale by all newsdealers, or will be sent to any address, postage prepaid, on receipt of price, 10 cents a copy. Postage-stamps taken the same as money.

FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher, 168 West 23d Street, New York City

"Moving Picture Stories"

A Weekly Magazine Devoted to Photoplays and Players.

THE BEST FILM MAGAZINE ON EARTH

PRICE 6c PER COPY

32 PAGES OF READING

Magnificent Colored Cover Portraits of Prominent Screen Performers!

OUT EVERY FRIDAY

Each Number Contains New Portraits and Biographies of Actors and Actresses—Six Stories of the Best Films on the Screens—Elegant Half-tone Scenes from the Plays—Interesting Articles About Prominent People in the Films—Doings of Actors and Actresses in the Studios and while Picture-making—Lessons in Scenario Writing, and names of Companies who buy your plays—Poems, Jokes and every bright Feature of Interest in Making Moving Pictures

THIS LITTLE MAGAZINE GIVES YOU MORE FOR YOUR MONEY THAN ANY OTHER SIMILAR PUBLICATION ON THE MARKET.

Its authors are the very best that money can procure; its profuse illustrations are exquisite, and its special articles are by the greatest experts in their particular line. No amount of money is being spared to make this publication the very best of its kind in the world. Buy a copy NOW from your newsdealer, or send us 6 cents in money or postage-stamps, and we will mail you any number you desire.

HARRY E. WOLFF, Publisher, 166 West 23d Street, New York City